

The Covid-19 pandemic and your Heart

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The double whammy of an overwhelmed healthcare and a paralyzed economy are the twin heartaches that the SARS CoV2 virus has brought upon humankind. For heart disease patients and physicians who treat them there is a third jeopardy: the impact of Covid on heart. Let us examine this briefly.

1. Increased vulnerability: The elderly and patients of heart disease & diabetes have been found to be particularly vulnerable to contracting severe Covid-19 infection when exposed and developing serious complications. These patients should particularly be careful and practice using masks and social distancing.
2. Heart attacks: In patients with severe Covid infections, scientists have noted that there is an increased tendency to form clots in the arteries. This can potentially mean development of heart attacks or clots in the lungs.
3. Heart muscle affliction by Coronavirus: Covid infection affects multiple systems in the body. Though most patients are affected through the lung and respiratory symptoms predominate, a good number of Covid deaths are due to cardiac reasons. The virus afflicts the heart muscle cell causing inflammation and weakens the pumping efficiency of the heart. This condition known as 'Myocarditis' is an important cause of death due to Covid-19 infection. Even when not fatal, this condition can potentially cripple the patient for long periods of time

4. Hypertension & Diabetes: Covid-19 and the consequent lockdown also meant that patients of diabetes and hypertension may have missed regular check-ups. These patients are also vulnerable in terms of Covid and so the emphasis, especially for elderly patients with chronic diseases is to self-monitor blood sugar and blood pressure. Most hospitals and clinics have facilities for tele- and video consultations and patients must make use of these to avoid unnecessary visits to the hospitals.

5. Blood pressure medications: The SARS Cov2 virus enters human tissue by latching on to a receptor on the surface of the cells. This receptor, called ACE2 receptor, increases in many folds in patients taking certain medicines for Blood Pressure. Early during the Covid pandemic a concern was raised that patients on these medicines may contract severe Covid infection. But with more and more scientific data pouring in, it is now clear that these BP medicines do not cause any harm during the pandemic. Patients are reassured and advised by their Physicians not to stop any BP medicines.

In case of any symptoms of heart attack or other emergencies, the public is advised not to ignore these out of fear and seek prompt medical attention.

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