



Impact of Lockdown due to COVID-19 in India

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ABSTRACT

The Indian Government has declared the COVID-19 outbreak a "notified disaster" in mid of March. To address the situation, a pan-India approach has taken. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation and the Indian Statistical Institute in their joint study found that around 20 lakh COVID-19 cases and 54,000 deaths were stave off due to lockdown. This article analyses effect of lockdown in following areas, like child and maternal Health, Geriatric Health, and impact on other health programs of public health importance and impact on Environment and Social impact. UNICEF estimated about 1.2 million deaths in the routine health coverage because of neglected maternal and child health care in the next six months. The risk of mental illness becomes more common during the period of lockdown. So proper interventions required in health system after lockdown to come back to the routine life and give importance to the other important neglected diseases to prevent from disease morbidity and mortality.

Keywords: COVID-19, Impact of Lockdown, Pandemic.

INTRODUCTION

The Indian Government has declared the COVID-19 outbreak a "notified disaster" in mid of March. To address the situation, a pan-India approach has taken. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation and the Indian Statistical Institute in their joint study found that around 20 lakh COVID-19 cases and 54,000 deaths were stave off due to lockdown. However, it is seen that lockdown has negatively impacted routine health service delivery affecting child and maternal health, geriatric health and other routine services. It has also resulted in widespread mental agony. Hence it is necessary to analyse its impact on mental, maternal, child and elderly health and also on health system to understand Lockdown's real effectiveness in terms of averting morbidity and mortality. This is equally important to analyse environmental changes happened because of lockdown as this is a very

important determinant of health in India and worldwide. This article analyses effect of lockdown in following areas:

- Child and maternal Health
- Geriatric Health
- Impact on other health programs of public health importance
- Impact on Environment
- Social impact

CHILD AND MATERNAL HEALTH:

Lockdown has resulted in higher stress levels among vulnerable families. Women especially pregnant women are not able to access routine health check-

ups and newborns are also not getting required necessary care ,for ensuring survival because of restricted movement of common public. These days majority of health workers are involved in fighting COVID-19 hence they are not able to render routine health services like immunization, antenatal care, postpartum and newborn care etc. An additional 1.2 million deaths could occur in the upcoming six months, due to reductions in routine health coverage because of neglected maternal and child health care analysing from 118 low and middle-income countries as estimated by UNICEF.¹

High probability of an increase of gender-based violence, domestic violence or somatic punishment against woman and children. As there is restrictions of movements, girls and boys victims of violence, facing interference in seeking help.² Childline India 1098 confirms receiving 4.6 lakh complaints in the first lockdown of 21 days. Interventions were carried out apparently in 9385 cases. As much as 20 per cent of these cases were related to child protection from abuse.

About 53,016 children and their caregivers have got psychosocial support from UNICEF and its partners. Along with the National Institute of Health and Neuroscience, a psychosocial support package for children under care and their care providers was developed.

A significant part of 11.7 per cent of the global total child sexual abuse material was uploaded online from India as per US National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children. UNICEF published a report, giving information on parents and caregivers on how to keep their child safe during the COVID19 Pandemic.³

India's National Commission for Women (NCW) reported more than twofold rise in gender-based violence during the lockdown period in India. Factors compounding for the situation include the impoundment, financial problems due to the lockdown, and lack of access to alcohol.

GERIATRIC HEALTH

Geriatric people are particularly susceptible to the risk of COVID-19 infection because of their aging immune system its hard to fight off diseases. Other reason is chronic health conditions such as hypertension, diabetes and cardiovascular disease are

common among them compared with younger people.⁴ They are less capable of supporting themselves in isolation. People affected with Impaired cognitive abilities might have behavioural problems and wandering tendencies that can add to challenges of keeping them isolated at times of such outbreak. Psycho-social vulnerability, during lockdown and quarantine increases the likelihood to depressive disorders, sleep disturbances and chronic stress. Infected people are also at increased risk for post-traumatic stress syndrome, if the stress is prolonged. Elder people are 2 to 3 times higher chance of indulging in suicidal activities which is often under reported.⁵

IMPACT ON OTHER HEALTH PROGRAMS OF PUBLIC HEALTH IMPORTANCE

The effect of the pandemic on mental health will be as bad as wars . Mental health intervention should be a part of the disaster management planning of all countries. In addition to various psychological problems the pandemic has caused severe threats to the lives and physical health of people around the globe.⁶

Isolation has reduced the infections but on the other hand, it reduces access to family, friends, and other social support systems.⁷ Longer the durations of quarantine were associated with poorer mental health specifically, post-traumatic stress symptoms, avoidance behaviours, and anger.⁸ Participants in many studies reported fears about their own health or fears of infecting others. Reduced social, physical contact with others and loss of usual routine activities were frequently causes increased frustration, and a sense of isolation from the rest of the world, which was distressing to participants.⁹⁻¹² Inadequate basic supplies causes frustration, anxiety and anger during quarantine.¹³

IMPACT ON HEALTH SERVICES DELIVERY:

Health systems have struggled to maintain routine services and its utilisation in past epidemics.¹⁴ Previous infectious disease outbreaks indirectly resulted in increases in mortality caused by reductions in the provision and use of routine health services.

A study of the 2014 epidemic of Ebola virus disease estimated that during the outbreak, antenatal care

coverage, family planning, facility delivery, and postnatal care has affected drastically.¹⁵

Because of the pandemic both the provision and utilisation of reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health (RMNCH) services will get affected. RMNCH interventions delivered through campaigns are being reduced in scale.¹⁶

COVID-19 has also disrupted the global pharmaceutical and medical supply chain. Governments restrictions are negatively affecting economies.¹⁷ Data shows that COVID-19 pandemic causes huge disruption to health systems and reduces basic needs in lower middle income countries (LMIC) which increases maternal and child deaths in upcoming days. This would represent a 9.8–44.7% increase in under-5 child deaths per month, and an 8.3–38.6% increase in maternal deaths per month, across the 118 countries.¹⁶

The worst-hit are those whose quality of life, or life itself, hangs on regular interventions, such as dialysis, blood transfusions, pre- and ante-natal checkups, tuberculosis (TB), cancer and other chronic diseases.

At 27%, India has the world's largest TB load. Medical Research Foundation director Nerges Mistry says 'Lack of adherence to the drug regimen was 15-17%. Its risen to 40% because of COVID 19. Tb notifications has dropped abruptly [to the national portal, Nikshay] from 15,000 a day to just 2,000, indicating that access to a centre has been affected and diagnosis is compromised. TB also equally dangerous as it can infect 10-15 others.

Because of the problem in getting immunization, 90% of under-2s as well as pregnant women against eight diseases that kill or can seriously disable by 2020. Naveen Thacker, International Paediatric Association executive director reports that '15-20 million children are missing out, because doctors, ASHA (accredited social health activist) workers and auxiliary nurse midwives have been subpoenaed.

SOCIAL IMPACT:

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the global economy is expected to shrink by over 3 per cent in 2020 – the steepest slowdown since the Great Depression of the 1930s. In terms of employment, youth are disproportionately

unemployed and are likely to be severely affected by COVID-19. According to the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE) India's unemployment rate is now at a record high of 27.1%, around 122 million Indians lose their jobs in April alone. The new data shows India's unemployment figures are four times that of the US. Migrants and homeless people are particularly vulnerable at this time due to significantly higher rates of unemployment and communicable diseases and lack of access to essential services and absence of appropriate healthcare.

Food, a basic necessity, managed to create the maximum panic as the lockdown was announced. Further, the monetary benefits made under Prime Minister Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM CARES fund) have also started to reach the beneficiaries. A healthy immune system plays a vital role in defending our body against disease by fighting infection but still a significant proportion of citizens are facing the maximum hardships to access food.¹⁸

IMPACT ON ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS:

Lockdown resulted in numerous impacts on the environment and the climate. The severe decline in transportation has caused many regions to experience a significant drop in air pollution in the polluted zones of India.

In comparison with 2019 the reduction of PM10 and PM2.5 is as high as about 60% and 39% respectively. About 40 to 50 percent improvement in air quality is identified within four days of commencing lockdown. Remarkable reduction in NAQI in megacities in Central, Eastern, Western, Southern, and Northern parts was observed to the tune of 54%, 49%, 37%, 43%, and 31% respectively. Overall, the study is thought to be a useful supplement to the regulatory bodies since it showed the pollution source control can attenuate the air quality.¹⁹

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