

Handling Covid-19 as an Endemic Disease by Universal Health Organization



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To: Dr. Pradeep Vyas

Addl. Chief Secretary, Public Health Department, Government of Maharashtra

**Subject: Handling Covid-19 as an endemic disease;
context: D.O. No. Z-23015123312022-DM Cell**

- 1 Introduction:** Pandemic in India can best be said to be over since end of second wave due to natural immunity following natural infection. The prediction about third and fourth waves have accordingly failed. Covid is now an endemic disease globally that will continue to exist forever with different levels of endemicity. Prior to covid, there were six coronaviruses, 4 human corona viruses causing common cold like illness, then came SARS-Cov-1 and then MERS. SARS-CoV-2 is the seventh of such coronaviruses. This virus SARS-CoV-2 is not going anywhere like earlier six and we have to learn to adjust our lives accordingly. Being RNA virus, its chances for it to continuously evolve into different strains is natural which gets compounded by immune pressure exerted by mass vaccination with untested experimental vaccines that cannot prevent infection. As a general rule of evolution most viruses as they evolve through pandemics become less virulent and more easily transmissible as we have seen with different strains of SARS-CoV-2. Therefore, making a successful vaccine against these viruses is a mirage. Further, the subsequent less virulent strains themselves act as nature's vaccine/boosters.
- 2 Need for strategy adaptation:** The strategy for any disease control is based upon multiple factors like population composition, immune status, density of population, disease characteristic like epidemic potential and case fatality rate, health resources. No strategy can remain constant all through a pandemic, especially when evidence about its effectiveness or futility is quite clear. It is now well established that lockdowns, universal masking, social distancing, universal vaccination do not alter the course of pandemics and resulting into wastage of resources and avoidable collateral damage to economy. Natural infections have emerged to be the only factor that helps which was largely ignored. Repeating same mistakes do not yield different results.
- 3 Testing:** If we are still getting 15-20 thousand cases is because we are testing for this infection and we may get many more cases for any other disease if we start doing tests with RTPCR which is a bad test for diagnosing diseases especially when we leave other tools aside clinical features, epidemiological correlation and other lab tests. Most endemic diseases do not require much testing. Testing does not do anything in this Covid pandemic as we have hardly anything specific treatment to offer. People have learnt that it is a usual self-limiting viral infection and are now

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rightly deciding not to test. It is time to stop testing except on admitted cases or purely for surveillance amongst SARI/ILI cases. Targeting ZERO COVID is a fallacy and pointless.

- 4 **Tracking:** Tracking is a strategy to track case of a new disease or early cases which are usually imported or when limited to a cluster or small area to stop further spread into general population. Since virus has swept through the population long back, this tracking is not only unwarranted but wasteful as well.
- 5 **Treat:** Since most covid cases recover on their own, they need very little interventions. There are no definitive drugs to treat this infection but mostly treatment is directed at preventing and managing complications in high-risk cases.
- 6 **Vaccinate:** It has been shown by data available from across globe that highest vaccinated countries see maximum resurgence of cases due to antibody dependent enhancement of infection as **Covid vaccines have FAILED to PREVENT infection and also to STOP TRANSMISSION.** The indiscriminate and continued mass vaccination has definitely proved to be counterproductive as adverse effects following immunisation are increasing making even uncommon and rare side effects are appearing. Vaccines no longer are helping individuals and communities. It is no longer a beneficial strategy.
- 7 **Redefining Covid Appropriate Behaviour:** It is time to accept that this fancy phrase Covid Appropriate behaviour needs to be relooked and redefined. The famous SMS strategy of social distancing, mask and hand sanitizer has not worked and there is no evidence to support its continued practice. Instead, we need to educate people to **remain physically active, eat good diet, expose themselves to sunlight and remain outdoors** as the new Covid appropriate behaviour. We have learnt that masking is not needed except for sick people and their caregivers. We must ask people to adopt healthy lifestyle and avoid undue stress of catching a simple virus like endemic covid. Repeat infections are seen increasingly more amongst vaccinated compared to natural infection recovered unvaccinated.
- 8 **Change the focus to more important health issues:** Its high time we start to look at more important health issues which kill many more times than covid and are being neglected due to unnecessary obsession with this covid. The damage that we are doing to our population will be seen in the years to come as is reported by WHO as well. There have been huge setbacks to immunisation against VPDs, education of children, TB control program, NCDs control program and this only makes things worse when population becomes more vulnerable to simple pathogen like SARS-CoV-2.