

Universal Health Organisation (UHO)

Weekly Newsletter – 22 Sep 2023



The weekly newsletters bring the updates on the science, battered and bruised during the pandemic, legal updates and impact of activism for a just society, across the world. These are small steps to promote Transparency, Empowerment and Accountability – the ethos of the UHO.

Nipah Virus in Kerala – Are the lockdowns and school closures in several districts in the state justified?

The state of Kerala, India, has [closed](#) schools, offices and public transport in Kozhikode district in response to the re-emergence of the Nipah virus. Going to extremes, [containment zones](#) have been established around nine villages. This decision was taken on 13 September 2023, as a precaution against the spread of the virus, which has seen two deaths and six confirmed cases so far.

Draconian measures have become the protocol for all infections post Covid-19 pandemic. Studies have established that these crude unscientific measures caused more [collateral harm](#) with negligible benefit particularly in poor countries. Going against this evidence, thousands of offices and schools have been closed in Kerala. Such measures fracture society and are unscientific. More rational would be preventive measures at individual level by proper awareness among the masses.

Nipah virus is a zoonosis, i.e. primarily an infection of animals. Humans can get accidentally infected. The reservoir (where the virus thrives) is the fruit bat also called flying fox. Some of them may even enter human dwellings. Fruit bats are consumed as bushmeat by some communities. The virus was named after the village in Malaysia where it was first identified in 1999. Since then occasional localized outbreaks have occurred in Singapore, Bangladesh and India. While fatality of confirmed cases has been in the range of 40-75% the outbreaks have been localized.

The high fatality rates is inversely related to its epidemic or pandemic potential as higher fatality translates to lesser transmission potential as reflected by R_0 . The R_0 [of the Nipah virus](#) is less than 1, about 0.4, i.e. one infected person will transmit the infection to less than 1 person. Infections with R_0 greater than 1 have higher chances to cause epidemics and pandemics. Nipah presently does not show that potential.

Instead of closing schools and businesses and declaring containment zones more appropriate would be spreading proper awareness without panic. Social media platform and local television channels are important platforms for proper risk communication. Others include FM radio stations and local newspapers and posters. Farm workers may be informed to avoid direct contact with farm animals, especially during slaughter and disposal, wearing appropriate personal protective clothing during hazardous tasks. Villagers may be told to avoid eating date palm fruits and drinking date palm juice that may be contaminated if fruit bats live on these palm trees.

Closing schools and businesses will be counterproductive as this will drive the people back to the farms and crowded homes with higher risk of transmission. Fruit bats can move around freely, some flying up to 150 km and can enter homes and temples. How will restricting people's movement and creating containment zones help? While they may move freely they do not actively seek out humans to infect them. The infection passes indirectly when humans consume fruits contaminated by them. If people are made aware the chances of infection will be negligible.

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A far deadlier zoonosis than Nipah, rabies with 100% mortality [killed](#) 307 people in India last year with 48 deaths in Delhi alone. Stray dogs still abound on Indian streets with frequent news report of a child or an [elderly](#) being [mauled](#) by them. How callous can our policy makers be – neglecting obvious public health menaces and chasing an exotic virus with far less deaths at the population level!

Are predators on the prowl in India?

UHO is concerned about predators on the prowl, i.e. vested interests exploiting the situation against a background of panic created by the irresponsible mainstream media. Certain developments in the recent past are disturbing.

The National Institute of Health (NIH), USA, has already launched [clinical trials](#) of mRNA vaccines for Nipah virus. Some time back a private institute in South India, Manipal Centre for Virus Research, was surreptitiously [collaborating](#) with the US based Centre for Disease Control (CDC) for research on Nipah virus which has also been identified as a potential bio-weapon. The lab was being used without approval of the government of India to map the Nipah virus which can be used to develop the vaccine, the intellectual propriety rights of which will not be with India. Studying how the human host reacts to the virus can also potentially help in the notorious, “gain of function” research.

Private institutions are under immense pressure as well as career scientists and academicians to get “foreign” grants for their research to advance in their institutional rankings and careers, respectively. Alas in this desperation they are liable to [sell their souls](#) if not their country to Western powers.

Besides, the WHO under the influence of pharmaceutical industry which is one of its major funders, is desperately on the lookout for the next pandemic so as to push through the Pandemic Treaty which will give extraordinary autocratic powers to this unelected body and deprive democracies of their autonomy. The WHO if not halted in its tracks has the potential to become the greatest predator. And we have modern day Mir Jaffars, with [conflicts of interest](#), as illustrated by the Covid-19 pandemic, who can betray the country’s interest to secure grants from the WHO, CDC and NIH of USA, and other foreign funders, the largest one being the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Health Ministry directs NMC to lower standards for entry to specialist courses.

The Health Ministry has [directed](#) the National Medical Commission to reduce the cut-off for the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) – Post Graduate (PG) to zero percentile across all categories on Wednesday.

Some concerned people complain about lowering of standards in medical education. They should know that the authorities do not want brilliant critically thinking doctors anymore. In the near future, doctors will be expected to follow standard treatment guidelines given by WHO, CDC Atlanta, USA, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and other august bodies, without application of mind and knowledge.

Thinking and knowledgeable doctors spread “misinformation” and are a nuisance. Proposed Pandemic Treaty is here to create One World, One Health, One Doctor (Tedros and his disciples!) who will keep giving diktats.