

# IIPHG NEWSLETTER



INDIAN  
INSTITUTE OF  
PUBLIC HEALTH  
GANDHINAGAR

## COVID-19 SPECIAL

Periodic e-Newsletter  
Issue V - May 2021

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This issue of IIPHG Newsletter is a  
Publication of IIPHG's  
COVID CARE COMMITTEE



Dear Colleagues,

I am happy to share the fifth issue of the COVID Special IIPHG Newsletter. We have received overwhelming responses from students, research staff, and faculty members and hope to receive your continued support in the future.

The country going through the disastrous effects of the second wave, IIPHG was not spared from its effects. Some students, staff, and faculty members encountered COVID-19 but fortunately, all recovered. IIPHG took immediate actions to prevent the further spread of COVID in the institute. We need to continue to follow precautions and COVID-19 safety measures.

We all are susceptible to COVID-19 infection but lately, I have realized, we are more susceptible to negative emotions. These negative emotions create chronic stress that adversely impacts immunity. Stay away from excessive use of digital devices, restrict consumption of COVID-related news that are often driven by fear, not facts.

Stay informed, stay positive, and stay healthy. We welcome your feedback, suggestions, or contribution to this newsletter.

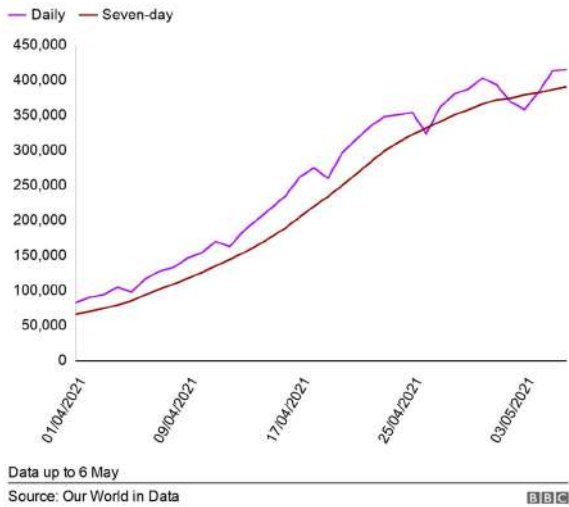
Dr. Shyam Pingle  
Chair, COVID Care Committee



# Devastating effects of COVID-19

The second wave of COVID-19 hit the country badly. The rise in case numbers (from Mid March to the first week of May 2021) has been exponential. Sudden rise in cases resulted in a chronic shortage of hospital beds, oxygen, ventilators, and medications (such as remdesivir). It was also evident in the desperate cries for help on social media platforms. Disturbing reports of people dying without getting timely treatment are coming from all over the country. In addition, rumours, black marketing of medications, agents to get hospital beds were rampant.

India's daily Covid cases



## Mucormycosis (black fungus) in COVID-19 patients is another challenge

Mucormycosis in COVID-19 patients have been talk of the town. The National COVID Task Force has issued an advisory and Union Ministry has asked States to declare it as an epidemic. It has made mandatory for states to report both suspected and confirmed cases to the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP).

### SYMPTOMS

Pain, redness around eyes and/or nose, fever, headache, coughing, shortness of breath, bloody vomits, and altered mental status.  
Warning signs: toothache, loosening of teeth, blurred or double vision with pain, sinusitis (nasal blockage or blackish/bloody discharge), cheekbone or one-sided facial pain or swelling, blackish discoloration of nose bridge/palate, thrombosis, skin lesion, chest pain



### Covid-19 symptoms: First vs second wave

- Higher proportion of asymptomatic individuals got admitted in the second wave
- Higher proportion of admitted patients showed breathlessness in the second wave
- Patients with a sore throat and dry cough were higher in first wave

FOI

Although youth and children are more affected compared to the first wave, the older population still remain more vulnerable.

## 'CoviSelf': the COVID-19 rapid home test kit

The ICMR has granted approval of self-use rapid COVID-19 home-test kit. The self-use test kit can be used by any symptomatic individual, or their immediate contacts of confirmed cases as per ICMR guidelines. They can test themselves, go into isolation and get treatment quickly. It is authorized for non-prescription home use.



# Reflections

## From Problems to Public Health Solutions

### Cases of COVID-19 is reducing but mortality among COVID-19 patients are on rise

High mortality in the second wave of COVID-19 is a concern. Co-morbid conditions, late treatment, and black fungus could be the cause. Pertinent questions are: How this can be better tackled? How health system should respond to this? Who are dying more? Those who are resourceful or those vulnerable people who are not able to afford / access healthcare services?

### Shortages of oxygen, remdesivir are threatening 'total collapse' of public health systems

While it is indeed an "oxygen" shortage during the early phase of the second wave, then "remdesivir shortage" and now an "amphotericin B shortage," each has its own reasons including panic state of people, the sudden surge of severe cases, infodemic, industry-induced shortages and so. Can the management (or mismanagement, as it seems) attribute to the systemic crisis of leadership in deploying life-saving materials at the appropriate place, at the appropriate time? Lack of foresight and system intelligence to rapidly foresee these requirements and responsively deploy them? Often these shortages for some time and while shortages can be "plugged", the underlying reasons why this shortage occurred often go unseen. Better planning can prepare the health system to be in a better position to respond to health emergencies.

Share your reflections on above issues or other pertinent public health problem, solutions or perspectives for next newsletter.

### Discussion on Mental Health in World Health Assembly

The 74th World Health Assembly (WHA) will be held from May 24–June 1. The WHA is the world's highest health policy-setting body of WHO. Several mental health topics will be discussed at the WHA The updated Mental Health Action Plan — 2013–2030 will be formally approved. The Global Mental Health Action Network has compiled documents related to the World Health Assembly briefing and Mental Health Action Plan. More details: <https://www.who.int/about/governance/world-health-assembly/seventy-fourth-world-health-assembly>

OpenWHO has introduced new interactive and synchronous learning opportunities on the platform. It offers a course on 30 topics. You may want to explore new courses and enroll. : <https://openwho.org/pages/catalogues>



# Need for Healthy Digital Habits

The use of digital devices has increased manifold during COVID-19. We know that digital technology is going to stay and abstinence from digital devices is unlikely to happen. Though long-term consequences of prolonged use of digital devices and excessive screen time are not clearly known, cultivating healthy digital habits is crucial for promoting physical and mental health.



## Time for Digital Detox



## Positive Use of Digital Media

Mobile Applications for positive mental health

- What's Up?
- Mindshift
- Stop, Breathe & Think
- Calm
- ThinkUp
- Coolblue
- Moodfit

Web resources on mental health

- <https://www.whiteswanfoundation.org/>
- <https://www.mannmela.in/>
- <https://www.theshrinkingcouch.com/>
- <https://www.smilingmind.com.au/>
- <https://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/>

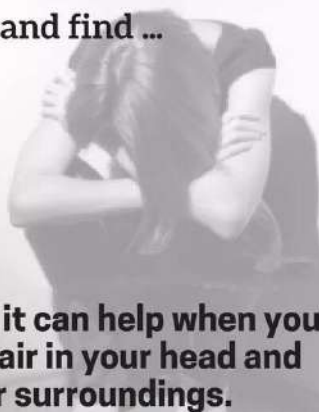
## HOW TO PREVENT AN ANXIETY ATTACK

Breathe deeply in through your nose and out through your mouth

Slowly look around you and find ...

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can touch
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 emotion you feel

This is called **GROUNDING** - it can help when you feel like you've done too far in your head and lost all control of your surroundings.



## Quit worrying and over-thinking

1. Recognize when "overthinking spiral" begins or in the middle of it
2. Acknowledge it by naming it. If it is about worry of health or fear of future, state that I am over-thinking about worry of health.
3. Let go these thoughts by following statement: This worry or fear is not real, it is self-created. It is not worthy following this thought and I let go these thoughts.
4. Shift your focus from your mind to your body through deep-breathing or pranayama or grounding technique.
5. Express your thoughts through creative art-writing, painting, music, dance etc.

# Students Corner

## Highlights of Research by Students



**Mehak Jolly, MPH student** contributed to a multi-authored review paper titled, "Mitigation of Mental Health Consequences during COVID-19 Pandemic in Response to Infodemic: A Global Epidemic of Misinformation." The present paper states that how misinformation leads to psychological consequences highlighting the concept of behavior, attitude, and mental health in context to Infodemic. Misinformation and myths related to COVID disease have worsened the condition and leads to panic, mental-health issues, increasing suicide rates among youngsters. Risk communication at the individual, community, and societal along with psychosocial support is need for an hour.

**Shubhangi Poddar, an MHA student** carried out research titled, "Psychological impact of COVID-19 pandemic on healthcare professionals in India." This survey was conducted online from April 2020 to May 2020 using the DASS-21 questionnaire and the Insomnia Severity Index. About 777 doctors participated in the survey. Among the doctors working for the pandemic, about half of them (55%) reported having moderate levels of depression, anxiety, and stress. The early screening and targeting of the medical workforce and psychological interventions are essential for protecting and maintaining the functionality of the healthcare system.

**"It is important to focus energy into a positive thought process," says Ms. Anushree Joshi, a doctoral student**

Ms. Anushree Joshi in her article, "Impact of COVID-19 on students: Time to reflect published in ExamBazar, writes how students can bravely and positively face the COVID-19 pandemic. For more details, read : <https://www.exambazaar.com/blogpost/impact-of-covid19-pandemic-on-students>

## Covid-19: The Road to Recovery

Dr. Akansha Verma, MPH student



My first reactions to COVID-19 positive result were shere “panic” and “fear.” Questions “what will happen now?”, “how will I deal with this?”, "who will help," and “what about the stigma?” occupied my mind. But to my surprise, IIPHG tackled it very well - taken prompt actions to prevent further spread.

After the initial hassle, started the real battle – loneliness and zero human contact. But all my friends, batchmates, professors, and seniors came to my support. The institute provided me with everything that I needed right from the online medical consultation, medicines, and all other supplies. My friends gave me immense emotional support to deal with the mental trauma of this disease. Professors kept checking up on me through calls and texts. Some of the seniors, whom I never met personally, encouraged me continuously through texts and sweet notes to slip through the other side of the door. And my professors ensured my parents about the safety of their only child. My meals and drinking water supply were taken care.

In this difficult time, I was able to find a home and family in IIPHG and helped me not only through COVID 19 but also through the parallel pandemic of mental trauma and stress. I am proud to see how the disease was dealt with in a public health institute.

# IIPHG Contribution

IIPHG actively engaged in research, awareness generation, and consultation to combat the COVID-19 crisis.

## Expert panelists:

- Prof. Dileep Mavalankar, Director-IIPHG, Faculties, and Research Staff featured in television programs, news channels as experts.

## Webinars on COVID-19:

- IIPHG in collaboration with UNICEF organized webinar series on
  - Addressing the safety and well being of health care workers & communities
  - Improving the quality of care for small & sick babies New standards and quality of care
  - Role of midwives and nurses in promoting essential newborn care
- Indian Institute of Public Health Gandhinagar in collaboration with the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and Natural Resources Defence Council, New York has organized a webinar on "The COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, sharing New York City's Response" on May 12, 2021, from 6.00 to 7.30 pm.
- Be kind to your mind: Managing stress among college students during COVID-19 jointly organized by IIPHG in collaboration with State Mental Health Authority Gujarat and BN Patel Institute of Paramedical and Science, Anand on May 22, 2021.

## Researches on COVID-19:

- Kotwani, P., Patwardhan, V., Pandya, A., Saha, S., Patel, G., Trivedi, Z. (2021). Valuing out-of-pocket expenditure and health-related quality of life of COVID-19 patients from Gujarat, India. *Journal of Communicable Diseases*, 53(1), 104-109. <https://doi.org/10.24321/0019.5138.202117>
- Pandya, A., & Saha, S. (2021). Policing during the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on mental health. *Journal of Mental Health Education*, 3(1)20-36.
- Pandya, A., Saha, S., Kotwani, P., & Patwardhan, V. (2021). Three-tier mental healthcare service delivery during COVID-19 pandemic in India. *Journal of Mental Health and Human Behaviour*, 25(2), 143-145. [https://doi.org/10.4103/jmhbb.jmhbb\\_70\\_20](https://doi.org/10.4103/jmhbb.jmhbb_70_20)
- Pandya, A., & Lodha, P. (2021). Mental health of college students amidst covid-19: implications for reopening colleges and universities. *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine*. Online first publication. May 5, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02537176211005622>
- Shah, K., Saxena, D., & Mavalankar, D. (2021). Vitamin D supplementation, COVID-19 and disease severity: a meta-analysis. *QJM: An International Journal of Medicine*, 114(3), 175-181.
- Shah, K., Kandre, Y., & Mavalankar, D. (2021). Secondary attack rate in household contacts of COVID-19 Paediatric index cases: a study from Western India. *Journal of public health (Oxford, England)*, fdaa269. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdaa269>
- Shah, K., Singhal, D., Patel, A., Gadhavi, B., Karan, J., Gaidhane, A., & Saxena, D. B. (2021). Dry eye disease during COVID-19: Need for investment into research to develop solutions?. *Indian Journal of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology*, 15(1).



We invite everyone to contribute to our next newsletter. Brief details of any new project or publication, achievement, or opportunities are welcome. Students / Alumni can contribute positive stories, their involvement in COVID-19 related research or work, or reflections on COVID-19 challenges or solutions for the newsletter. Those interested in volunteering for newsletter editorial assistance can write to us. Send your feedback/contribution to Dr. Apurvakumar Pandya at [apandya@iiphg.org](mailto:apandya@iiphg.org).