

Let's not make it COVID-21 & beyond

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It's been more than a year since the world started fighting the pandemic. We all took time to realise that this was the biggest crisis humanity was facing. The pandemic spared no one. People from all walks of life were impacted.

Credit must be given to various governments and the scientific community around the world to have found a vaccine in such a short span. As the number of cases started to reduce and the need to restart the economy, lockdowns started to ease. The availability of the vaccination too made a strong case for lockdowns to ease.

While we are better prepared to tackle the surge in the COVID-19 cases, it is important to understand that lockdowns are no solution to the pandemic. As responsible citizens we must adhere to highest standards of hygiene by regularly washing / sanitising our hands, wear masks and maintain social distance.

It's also time for the government to adapt the three mantras of: Educate, accelerate & expand the vaccination drive.

Educate:

We live in a world of information overdose. While platforms like social media have helped us connect to people and regions which were historically considered 'media dark' zones, the overdose of info has also meant a fair amount of misinformation being spread. While it is heartening to see medical practitioners, leaders and influencers take the jabs and reassure people about the safety of the vaccines we must continue with our efforts in educating the masses about the benefits of COVID vaccine.

Accelerate:

Now that proven vaccinations are available, we must accelerate its production & distribution. At the current pace, it is estimated that India will take 12 years to vaccinate everyone. Yes, you read that right, 12 long years. Obviously, we can't

afford to take that long. Like it has been suggested by various experts, the vaccination production can be democratised, and IP restrictions can be exempted so it encourages more players to help mass produce the vaccination.

The following suggestions might come in handy to the decision makers:

1. Step up vaccine production many folds
2. Establish vaccination centres capable of not only vaccinating but also resuscitate in the event of occurrence of serious side effect
3. Run the clinics 24/7
4. Vaccine should be available in open.
5. Those who can afford may avail early vaccination by a 'tatkai' scheme.
6. All the people returning home by flight must be vaccinated on arrival.
7. Outsourced services could vaccinate eligible ones in their homes at a nominal cost.

Expand:

With an increase in production, we can expand the vaccination drive to all age groups. The government has now allowed people over 45 years to get vaccinated but a wider net must be cast both in terms of demographic and geographic reach.

Our fight against the pandemic is not over. We can't afford to relax and undo all the progress we have made in the last few months. Stay safe, get vaccinated and spread the good word.

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