

India must rationalise a botched vaccination campaign: Lancet study

09 May 2021 | News

The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation estimates that India will see a staggering 1 million deaths from COVID-19 by Aug 1



The Lancet, a weekly peer-reviewed general medical journal known to be among the world's oldest and best-known, has published a study on India's COVID-19 emergency situation.

According to the study, India must now pursue a two-pronged strategy to overcome the crisis.

First, the [botched vaccination campaign](#) must be rationalised and implemented with all due speed. There are two immediate bottlenecks to overcome: increasing vaccine supply (some of which should come from abroad) and setting up a distribution campaign that can cover not just urban but also rural and poorer citizens, who constitute more than 65% of the population (over 800 million people) but face a desperate scarcity of public health and primary care facilities.

The government must work with local and primary health-care centres that know their communities and create an equitable distribution system for the vaccine.

Second, India must reduce SARS-CoV-2 transmission as much as possible while the vaccine is rolled out. As cases continue to mount, the government must publish accurate data in a timely manner, and forthrightly explain to the public what is happening and what is needed to bend the epidemic curve, including the possibility of a new federal lockdown.

Genome sequencing needs to be expanded to better track, understand, and control emerging and more transmissible SARS-CoV-2 variants. Local governments have begun taking disease-containment measures, but the federal government has an essential role in explaining to the public the necessity of masking, social distancing, halting mass gatherings, voluntary quarantine, and testing.

The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation estimates that India will see a staggering [1 million deaths](#) from COVID-19 by Aug 1.

The result will depend on the government owning up to its mistakes, providing responsible leadership and transparency, and

implementing a public health response that has science at its heart.