

Impact of COVID-19 on Medical Education in India: A Student's Perspective

PRABAL SAHA¹, LEKHA SAHA²

Keywords: Coronavirus disease, Educational institutions, Pneumonia, Transmission

Dear Editor,

Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) is caused by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). COVID-19 is so called because it was first reported on 31 December 2019 from Wuhan, the Capital City of Central China's Hubei Province. It was first identified in a cluster of atypical pneumonia cases of unknown cause. These patients exhibited severe respiratory symptoms, including Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS) [1].

Subsequently, COVID-19 spread across the globe and affected more than 213 countries and territories. As of 18 June 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) reported 8,242,999 cases and 445,535 deaths globally, which still continues to rise. At the same time point, there were 366,946 confirmed cases and 12,237 deaths in India [2].

On 24 March, the Government of India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, ordered a nationwide lockdown for 21 days to combat the spread of coronavirus and was further extended till 30th May 2020 [3]. This had a huge impact on health, economy, society and educational system.

Since SARS-CoV-2 is highly contagious, most educational institutions have cancelled or postponed all academic activities, conferences and workshops or other important events which involve large gatherings.

Career of medical students is affected to huge extent as compared to their peers from other non-medical courses because of the sudden interruption in their academics. Theory and practical curriculum have been suspended and all assessments withheld indefinitely. It has led to lots of uncertainties among students both because of the enigma surrounding the natural history of the disease and sudden disruption of all teaching and other educational activities. Due to suspension of clinical sessions, the required clinical skills may not be developed up to the mark for practicing medicine.

There is tremendous fear and depression among medical students who are the frontline workers in future for such a devastating pandemic [4]. In this scenario, the following steps should be taken to mitigate their apprehensions:

1. There should be immediate psychological counselling and support for all medical students through telemedicine or with the help of other technologies.
2. Awareness should be created about COVID-19 and measures should be taken to prevent transmission of SARS-CoV-2 among medical students and shield them from rumors and misinformation.
3. Social media platforms should be utilised by students and faculty, which will make them feel that they are connected, even though they are away from college.
4. Classes should be resumed through online teaching platforms, which will be an effective alternative to conventional academic activities during the COVID-19 crisis.

These measures can alleviate the stress and anxiety of students and can also simultaneously reduce the risk of transmission of the disease among them. Web based online classes will help them cope with the lost clinical hours and lagging syllabus which is already a huge loss for a medical student.

REFERENCES

- [1] Huang C, Wang Y, Li X, Ren L, Zhao J, Hu Y, et al. Clinical features of patients infected with 2019 novel coronavirus in Wuhan, China. *Lancet*. 2020;395(10223):497-506.
- [2] WHO Health Emergency Dashboard-COVID-19 Homepage: India Situation. Available at: <https://covid19.who.int/region/searo/country/in>; Accessed on 18.06.2020.
- [3] Gettleman J, Schultz K. Modi orders 3-week total lockdown for all 1.3 billion Indians. *The New York Times*. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/24/world/asia/india-coronavirus-lockdown.html>; Accessed on 24.03.2020.
- [4] Lu W, Wang H, Lin Y, Li L. Psychological status of medical workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic: A cross-sectional study. *Psychiatry Res*. 2020;288:112936. doi: 10.1016/j.psychres

PARTICULARS OF CONTRIBUTORS:

1. MBBS Student, Government Medical College and Hospital, Chandigarh, India.
2. Professor, Department of Pharmacology, Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh, India.

NAME, ADDRESS, E-MAIL ID OF THE CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Lekha Saha,
Department of Pharmacology, Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh, India.
E-mail: lekhasaha@rediffmail.com

PLAGIARISM CHECKING METHODS:

- Plagiarism X-checker: Jun 20, 2020
- Manual Googling: Jul 22, 2020
- iThenticate Software: Oct 15, 2020 (11%)

ETYMOLOGY: Author Origin

AUTHOR DECLARATION:

- Financial or Other Competing Interests: None
- Was Ethics Committee Approval obtained for this study? NA
- Was informed consent obtained from the subjects involved in the study? NA
- For any images presented appropriate consent has been obtained from the subjects. NA

Date of Submission: **Jun 19, 2020**

Date of Peer Review: **Jul 05, 2020**

Date of Acceptance: **Jul 22, 2020**

Date of Publishing: **Nov 01, 2020**