

## COVID 19 and its impact on Geriatric mental health in India

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### ABSTRACT

COVID 19 has affected the world and particularly the worst affected in countries like India. There are several suicides reported in the lockdown period in 2020-2021 because of mental suffering. Individuals committed suicide because of the fear of getting COVID 19 and associated depression. Depression, anxiety, adjustment disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, psychosis and even suicidal ideations and attempts are on high during this pandemic. Loneliness and social isolation can lead on to a state of sensory deprived state in elderly. Cognitive function is declining in aged. Role of NGO's and Government in helping the elderly to deal with the psychological and physical trauma is worth praising.

**Keywords:** COVID 19, Geriatric, Mental Health

COVID 19 has affected the world as a whole and has been declared as pandemic by WHO in 2020. The whole world is suffering but as a developing country mankind is suffering both mentally and physically in our country, India and as a citizen this is a shout out to the world. Fear and uncertainty are prevailing everywhere. There is widespread lock down nationwide announced by the prime minister in 2020 and later in the 2021 1<sup>st</sup> quarter after a sudden surge of cases as 2<sup>nd</sup> wave which started by April and is continuing. (The Lancet, 2020)

### COVID 19 in India

In India, excess of suicides were reported in the lockdown period in 2020-2021 because of mental suffering. As per the information, hundreds of individuals committed suicide because of the fear of getting COVID 19 and associated depression. (The Lancet, 2020., Rana U, 2020). This arising circumstance puts the emotional well-being of the older at higher stake of backslide as they are as of now vulnerable to suicidal thinking. Besides, older who are living alone get themselves unprotected because of the absence of social help in the current situation. Out of an aggregate of 8.6% older population, roughly 29% of old people are living in metropolitan cities. A study found that 6% of senior citizens live alone in India. Further, 10%–20% of them are suffering from psychological issues. (Rana U, 2020)

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### ***Role of NGO***

Age well foundation an NGO had revealed that fatalities and lack of oxygen and hospital beds had caused a big impact on the mental health of geriatric population in the country. They found that 82.4% of respondents in a survey reported health anxiety. There is 50% increase in mental health symptoms such as anxiety, sleeplessness, nightmares, depression etc and 70% experienced insomnia and nightmares because of poor quality sleep and around 63% of the elderly had symptoms of depression due to social isolation. The complaints of unceasing stress exaggerated in second wave of COVID in India. Almost 55% of the elder population had a feeling of fatigue and tiredness due to the restrictions to their movements and lifestyle activities due to lockdown and rules imposed by the authorities, 52.2 per cent, also complained of loss of appetite. (COVID-19 Mental Health Impact, 2020) The predisposing factor behind this change was that firm belief imposed in the minds of senior citizens about the fear contracting the coronavirus. (Zee Biz, 2021)

### ***Telepsychiatry service in India***

The National Telemedicine Service, set up by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Govt. of India's eSanjeevani has crossed another achievement by finishing 3 million conferences. At present, the National Telemedicine Service is functional in 31 States/Union Territories and day by day more than 35,000 patients in the nation are utilizing this computerized medium eSanjeevani, to look for wellbeing of patients which gives outpatient services which in special is useful for elderly residents in the limits of their homes. (E sanjeevani, 2021)

### ***Mental health in elderly***

Since this pandemic is the first of its sort and there are no conventions set down to beat the pressure brought about by this at no other time experienced circumstance. The contributing components adding to this pressure are fear of death, fear of losing family and friends, vulnerability, and uncertainty about the course of illness, fear of isolation on being tested positive, lack of emergency beds and ventilatory units all adds up to this pressure in senior citizens. (Rana U, 2020; Shteinlukht, T, 2021)

Psychological well-being is severely affected in this scenario. Depression, anxiety, adjustment disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, psychosis and even suicidal ideations and attempts are on high during this pandemic. Loneliness and social isolation can lead on to a state of sensory deprived state in elderly. Cognitive functions are also declining at a faster pace. Exacerbation of medical conditions like diabetes, systemic hypertension, heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, chronic kidney disease, osteoarthritis and other debilitating conditions including stroke, myocardial ischemia and malignancy is not getting adequate place in hospitals and delay in getting proper care. (Shteinlukht, T, 2021)

Delirium can be the outcome of numerous medical illnesses, especially in fragile and elderly, and is perceived as a risk factor for mortality. Hospitalised patients with COVID-19 in a large number experience delirium, and that the condition disproportionately affects elderly. The true prevalence of delirium in COVID-19 severely ill patients is unknown, patients with COVID-19 are at high risk of delirium due to systemic and neuro inflammation, organ failure, thrombosis, usage of sedatives, prolonged ventilation and oxygen support and isolation from families. ( Shteinlukht, T, 2021; Niaranjan Govind & Dr. Shabeer K P, 2021)

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Social connectedness assumes a significant part for the individuals who are not technically knowledgeable. Sufficient mindfulness through the right sources will cause less frenzy and reduce uneasiness. Passionate help through companions will likewise help. Clinical guidance through teleconsultations and tele advising consistently will likewise assume a significant part in keeping tension levels low. Truly being dynamic helps in making positive feelings. Government and NGO's recommend people should spend more time with the elderly, if possible, in a homely and safe environment and that provisions should be made to doorstep delivery of healthcare support systems for the elderly in poor health conditions or with disabilities. It has also urged that a special door-to-door vaccination campaign to be carried out for the vulnerable citizens.

### CONCLUSION

In this scenario it is important that each household to take care of their elder generation by making use of the facilities given by government. It is also important to make sure that all elderly population got vaccinated. Providing a social life inside the families by mutual sharing, communication and shared decision making all helps in improving the condition. Elder population should also be taught the essential e- services which is the responsibility of younger generation of the country.

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### Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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