

### Corona: The Current Nightmare

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Be it social media, television or wherever we turn our heads to, there is just one word echoing everywhere-CORONA. What is this? This is the term being used by the common man worldwide to address the deadly epidemic that the humanity is facing now, the Coronavirus disease 2019 or COVID-19. This was first reported in China as a pneumonia outbreak in December 2019 that traced its origin to a novel strain of coronavirus [1,2]. The strain was given the name 2019-nCoV by the World Health Organization (WHO) and later renamed as SARS-CoV-2 by the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses [3-7]. As per the data available till 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020, there are 15,328 confirmed deaths and 3,50,536 confirmed cases [8]. This illustrates at what an alarming rate the disease is spreading bringing the world to a standstill.

Though the disease was first reported in China, the aftermaths in different places are beyond imagination. For instance, in Italy, the disease has spread much wider and reported more deaths than that of China. The scenario has worsened to a level that there are no spaces for body disposal, thereby keeping the exposure constant. The reason for such a situation is that they did not abide by the warning and by the time, they realized, the matter had flown out of hands, whereas in China, the situations are slowly smoothening with reports of recovery of infected ones.

In India, the first reports came from Kerala. When the news of the epidemic broke out, the concerned personnel foresaw the arrival of students from China and took timely action and thus was able to contain the situation. Though there are still cases being reported, it is very apparent that the point of origin is not China but travelers, alone or with families, coming from places like the Middle East, European countries, Italy, etc. who join their respective families, leading to cluster spread and eventually community spread. The highest number of cases in India comes from Maharashtra. From all these points, it is very clear that it is of utmost importance to maintain social distance to curb transmission and break the chain of infection. It is with this aim that public places like malls, restaurants, gyms, etc. have been closed. Curfews was observed in India on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2020 by staying indoors from 7 am to 9 pm. Saudi Arabia has announced curfew for 21 days starting 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 by urging people not to leave their homes from 7 pm to 6 am. Hopefully, transmission can be controlled. Along with this it is also important maintain personal hygiene.

Though reports of recovery are heard, it does not match with the number of cases thus emphasizing the need of continuous speedy research for treatment and cure. The clinical trials conducted using Favipravir showed negative results for the virus in a shorter time as compared to a control group [The Third People's Hospital of Shenzhen, China] which indicates that that this drug can be included in the diagnosis and treatment plan for COVID-19. The tests for detection and diagnosis currently in India takes around 3 - 4 hours for the test results to come out. The FDA has approved a test that can diagnose in 45 minutes. This also can also be put into use on an enlarged scale for speedy ceasing of this menace.

At such crucial times, it is important to understand the life cycle of the causative agent to develop measures against the pathogens. RdRp (RNA dependent RNA polymerase) is the main replicase-transcriptase protein involved in the multiplication of the genetic content of this virus [9]. If drugs can be developed to control or curb the action of this protein, there is scope and hope to face this issue.

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