

**Let's Make the Worldwide Fight Against**

**COVID**

**Transformative for Other Global Threats like TB**

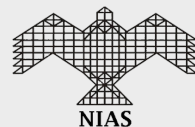
***TBINFO EDITORIAL***

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The lessons we are learning from COVID-19 pandemic can be transformative. Of course, the shortcomings in health care in each country have been exposed. However, the collaboration demonstrated by public and private sectors across the globe to find a solution is unprecedented. In our first issue of TBinfo, our appeal is to propagate the initiatives to address equally threatening infectious diseases such as Tuberculosis.



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Currently, the world is reeling from Covid-19 pandemic. The awareness campaigns to reduce the spread of this highly contagious virus have made some impact. Retrospectively, post the epidemic in China and the loss of more than 3,000 lives; everybody probably apprehended it becoming a global threat. But never have imagined the magnitude to be this big. In a global economy where the cross-border business has been the hallmark of success and survival, lockdowns, travel restrictions, closure of non-essential services etc have become a norm across the globe in the past six months and still counting. The pandemic has impacted us as individuals, communities, countries and continents. On a positive note, it brought us together to fight and help each other. It is heartening to see Asian countries like Taiwan, Singapore and South Korea showed the world the way by their proactive measures to contain the spread of the virus and minimize the casualties. We sincerely hope this testing phase will pass and we will be back to normalcy sooner than the later.

On the hindsight, the pandemic is teaching us how to prepare ourselves in a worldwide threat like this. Of course, the advent of technology in terms of electronic media is playing a vital role in this. The phrases like 'social distancing', 'stay home, stay safe', 'self-quarantine' etc. are not words from health workers or medical practitioners or government, they are widely used and practised by citizens and communities. We are becoming more and more aware of the precautionary measures against this novel coronavirus.

It is heartening to see a country as diverse as India waking up to the challenge in a united way both at the government and citizen level. The efforts to bring solutions both in terms of treatment and vaccine have opened up a few new ways of collaboration among big pharma, biotech, non-profit organizations and Governments. The ongoing clinical trial of the coronavirus vaccine that has emerged from the University of Oxford-AstraZeneca collaboration is a great example. Furthermore, the model of partnership with manufacturing companies across the globe has opened another avenue to meet demand and affordability. The rapid innovation of a novel vaccine or drug used to be unthinkable during the pre-COVID era.

Can it be a tipping point for the fight against chronic infectious diseases that are even deadlier, such as tuberculosis (TB)? TB is a global health problem and has been responsible for the loss of millions of lives worldwide every year (<https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/tuberculosis>). The current standard of care is long and stressful for the patients leading to non-compliance that results in drug-resistant TB. Additionally, social reaction and isolation against TB patients put unnecessary psychological pressure on patients to come out and seek help. While the pharma, government and non-profit research organizations are working towards finding novel drugs and treatment for TB, we as global citizens can hugely benefit the cause by talking about it. This magazine is a small effort towards this direction.

There has been concerns and rightly so, that the COVID-19 pandemic is adversely affecting the TB services in prevention, case-detection and management. This might be inevitable considering the unprecedented pressure the health care system is facing now and the need to mobilize the resources.

The pragmatic approach however is our preparedness to deal with this kind of situation and make sure our long term commitment to STOPTB ([http://stoptb.org/news/stories/2020/ns20\\_014.html](http://stoptb.org/news/stories/2020/ns20_014.html)) is not taken a back seat. The article from [Dr. Ansu Bhardwaj](#) in this issue is an eye opener. At the same time the response from digital technology to support the communities and health care system during COVID has been rapid and innovative. Add the innovations from big pharma and non-profit organizations to fight against cancer to our learning. The article from [Dr Peter Kapitein](#) from the company Inspire2Live is inspirational in this regard. The article from [Dr Shailesh Nayak](#) has emphasized that India needs to take the lead in developing a strategy to enhance its efforts to eradicate TB. [Dr V Bhujanga Rao's](#) article talks about new technological intervention such as SAFE (Satellites for Epidemiology) for better surveillance of TB. Regarding invention in treatments, [Dr Urmi Bajpai's](#) article has emphasized on exploring the possibility of phage therapy in the battle against drug-resistant TB. [Dr Rudrodip Majumdar's](#) article has cited the need for new vaccines towards achieving Millennium Development Goal of eliminating **TB** globally by 2050. Is this the time to make our efforts towards fight against TB transformative? I strongly believe so.