

Webinar on 'Traditional Knowledge and Formal Medicine: A Complementary Approach to Combat COVID-19'

New Delhi, May 06: Formal medicine is fairly nascent dating back to a few hundred years, but traditional knowledge of medicine has been in existence for over 5000 years. However, traditional knowledge still needs to establish itself with more scientific validations. These thoughts were expressed by Dr. Shekhar C. Mande, DG, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). Dr. Mande was addressing a webinar on 'Traditional Knowledge and Formal Medicine: A Complementary Approach to Combat COVID'. This webinar was jointly organized by CSIR-NISCAIR in collaboration with CSIR-NISTADS and Vijnana Bharati (VIBHA) on 14 May 2020.

Prof. Ranjana Aggarwal, Director, CSIR-NISCAIR and CSIR-NISTADS, has appreciated the spirit of CSIR under the leadership of Dr Mande who geared up institution to combat COVID-19 even before this was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Dr Mandexpected excellent outcomes on this topic of importance and he appreciated Prof. Ranjana for conceptualizing the wonderful theme for this webinar.

Dr. MLB Bhatt, Vice Chancellor, King George's Medical University (KGMU), Lucknow, has reassured that most of the COVID-19 cases are with mild symptoms and only less than 1 per cent requires hospitalisation or critical care. He emphasised that only those with co-morbid conditions like diabetes, cardiovascular disease (CVD), and kidney ailment may need hospitalisation after being infected with coronavirus. The main preventive care is to have balanced diet, have plenty of fluids, sound sleep of 6-8 hours, practice yoga and pranayamas. There is no need to get panic or being stressed as this may weaken your immunity. He emphasised the importance of Ayurveda and herbs like Ashwagandha and Giloy to boost immunity.

Dr Tanuja Manoj Nesari, Director, All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA), has suggested to take care of psychosomatic conditions as psyche has a major effect on soma (body). During her talk, the role of Ayurveda is of utmost importance for prophylaxis and management of

COVID-19. This also gives scope for its integration with formal medicine to make them complementary for effective combat strategy, said Dr. Nesari.

Dr. Ram A. Vishwakarma, Director, CSIR- Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (IIIM), Jammu, highlighted CSIR activities to combat COVID-19 that include research and development on drugs and vaccine, testing, sanitisers, hospital equipment and the likes. He described activities such as repurposing of molecules and clinical trials of existing molecules from CSIR Knowledge Bank. He feels that this crisis has given an opportunity to globally position our traditional systems of medicine. He talked about host-directed therapies and phyto-pharmaceuticals. He apprised that CSIR is already working with the AYUSH Ministry for trials of four important plant-based products. He said that traditional knowledge will have to withstand the scrutiny of science to establish itself as medicine.

Dr Rama Jayasundar, Prof. NMR & MRI, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), said that the traditional or ancient medicine and modern medicine are two different systems. These two together can help us to understand the human system and find the right efforts needed to benefit the society. Ayurveda focuses on mind, body, and consciousness and their interconnection can help in coping with challenging situations like COVID-19.

An AYUSH Expert Dr. G. Geetha Krishnan said WHO is looking for opportunities of traditional medicine and understand the clinical interventions to fight the pandemic. Worldwide initiatives are being taken for the right approach for therapeutics so to fill up the gaps for the healthcare delivery for COVID management. WHO very well recognises the importance of traditional medicine system. Many countries across the world is actively involved in this area to fight the pandemic such as China, Nigeria, Thailand, Japan, Malaysia, Republic of Korea, South Africa, and Ethiopia. Besides, the Government of India through the AYUSH Ministry is actively involved in traditional medicine research to combat COVID-19. COVID-19 crisis has provided us an opportunity to do research in traditional medicine systems in an extensive manner, explained Dr. Geetha Krishnan.

Dr Punit Misra, Professor, Community Medicine, AIIMS, said that we have to live with COVID-19 as it will stay for long with us. COVID-19 is a highly contagious disease with asymptomatic and symptomatic conditions. Especially, elderly people and people suffering from diseases like cardiovascular, diabetic and kidney diseases are more prone to infection. Common symptoms of COVID are fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Uncommon symptoms include headache, vomiting, diarrhoea, sore throat, running nose, tiredness, skin, eye symptoms, etc. The virus takes about 2-14 days incubation time for the disease to appear once it infects an individual. As there are no medicines/medications available to prevent COVID-19 infection, we need to be cautious about ourselves so that we can live with it but in a healthy way. This is possible by maintaining a physical, mental and social well-being. In case of infection, we need not panic as 80% of cases are mild and does not require medical urgency. Overall, positive thoughts are helpful to fight the uncertainties due to COVID.

Jayant Sahasrabuddhe, National Organizing Secretary, VIBHA, concluded by highlighting that the linkage between traditional and formal medicines serves as an effective asset against COVID. He appreciated the efforts of all eminent speakers to present excellent thoughts for all of us. He expressed his gratitude for successful culmination of ideas. Participants from various CSIR institutions and VIBHA have expressed their presence during the webinar. Participants from VIBHA and other institutions were also part of this webinar.