

Dealing with the unknown during and beyond the pandemic – Webinar to bring together experts on mental health

For the eighth in the series of webinars COVID-19 ‘Ask the Experts’, Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI), Faridabad, DBT-Wellcome Trust India Alliance, IAVI and Nature India brought together mental health experts to address issues related to mental health during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

WEBINAR ON
COVID-19
ASK THE EXPERTS - Part VIII

Dealing with the Unknown: Mental Health Challenges during COVID-19

Sumi Jain
Public Health Consultant
Department of Health
Chhattisgarh

Vikram Patel
Psychiatrist & Professor
Harvard Medical School
& Sangath, Goa

Lakshmi Ravikanth
Deputy Dean
Banyan Academy of
Leadership in Mental Health
(BALM)

Shyam Bhat
Physician & Psychiatrist
Trustee, The Live Love
Laugh Foundation

8 TH JUNE
2:00-3:30 PM IST

Register:
bit.ly/COVID19ExpertsWebinar8

Logos: thsti, iavi, nature india, India Alliance, DBT wellcome

Fear, worry, and stress are normal responses to perceived or real threats, more so during times when we are faced with imponderables. It is normal to be scared, worried or stressed in a pandemic, such as the ongoing COVID-19.

Alongside the fear of contracting the virus, our lives faced significant changes in a country-wide lockdown. Our movements were restricted to help contain and reduce the spread of the virus. Working from home, temporary unemployment, online classes, and lack of physical contact with family members, friends, and colleagues have become the new realities. The impact of the pandemic and the lockdown on the most vulnerable groups has been deep and far-reaching. More than ever before, it has, therefore, become important that we look after our mental, as well as our physical health.

Here are few take home messages from the webinar that had Prof Vikram Patel (Co-Founder, Sangath India), Dr. Lakshmi Ravikanth (The Banyan Academy of Leadership in Mental Health),

Dr. Shyam Bhat (Psychiatrist, Physician & Trustee, The Live Love Laugh Foundation) and Dr. Sumi Jain (Department of Health, Chhattisgarh).

- Prof. Patel busted myths around depression - “Depression implies weakness”, “Depression is an illness of westernized, affluent Indians”, “Depression is a manufactured narrative by the pharma”.
- “When you are able to see what the future possibly holds, the brain feels relaxed”, said Dr. Bhat pointing out at the role of uncertainty in causing anxiety during the pandemic.
- Dr. Ravikanth threw light on the work being undertaken by The Banyan. She pointed out that it’s important to not medicalize all problems; social response is important in mental health interventions.
- Dr. Sumi Jain highlighted how the challenge of the pandemic are being countered by training medical officers, frontline health workers to address mental health challenges in the hinterlands of Chhattisgarh.

The webinar broadly covered the following topics:

- Deconstructing fear, worry, and stress during a pandemic
- Dealing with uncertainty and the new ‘normal’
- Stay home - only easy to hashtag?
 - Impact of the crisis on the mental health of vulnerable groups, frontline health workers and journalists
 - Mental health of those living with COVID-19 – patients and caregivers
- How has COVID changed mental health care? What would it look like post-COVID?
 - Definition of a support group now that we have to “socially” distance
 - Role of technology in mental health care: opportunities and risks
- Role of the Government in mobilising support and resources for mental health care during and after the pandemic
- Mental health research – dealing with redefined research priorities, setbacks and related opportunities due to COVID-19

Contact person:

Dr. Siuli Mitra (smitra@thsti.res.in)