

## Popular science talk on second wave of the COVID pandemic and the emerging threat of AMR

In the wake of World Antimicrobial Awareness Week (WAAW), Dr. Arvind Sahu and Dr. Rajesh Karyakarte will discuss about the second wave of the COVID pandemic vis-a-vis the emerging threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR), at a webinar by 'Bhavatal', an initiative in Pune that is involved in science popularization through the local language.



Webinar in Marathi to create awareness about the second wave of the COVID pandemic, and the emerging threat of antimicrobial resistance

Dr. Sahu is a scientist at the National Centre for Cell Science (DBT-NCCS), Pune. An expert in the field of complement biology, he studies how the immune system interacts with and tackles infections such as those caused by viruses. Dr. Rajesh Karyakarte is the Head of the Department of Microbiology at the B. J. Medical College, Pune. This webinar will was conducted in Marathi, and was held on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

The fear of the world being engulfed by a second wave of COVID is among the most discussed topics, of late. However, another threat that has been looming large over us, but has not received the attention that it urgently deserves, is AMR. AMR occurs when disease-causing microorganisms like bacteria, fungi and other parasites that could earlier be inhibited or killed by antimicrobial drugs, develop resistance following exposure to these drugs over time, and eventually become immune to their effects. The COVID pandemic crossing paths with AMR could present a bigger challenge because any co-infection with antibiotic-resistant

bacteria might worsen the prognosis of COVID patients, and conversely, the increased use of antimicrobials to manage COVID could potentially accelerate the development of AMR.

AMR is the key reason behind the increasing risk of life-threatening infections. Therefore, the mechanisms leading to the emergence of such drug resistance is a subject of intense research. While clinicians and scientists recognize the gravity of this situation, there is widespread ignorance about AMR among other stakeholders, including the general public. This is especially disturbing since the latter could inadvertently contribute to AMR, out of sheer ignorance. Therefore, the WHO has been annually holding the World Antimicrobial Awareness Week (WAAW) over the past 5 years, to increase awareness about this global health treat, and to encourage best practices among the general public, health workers and policy makers to prevent the spread of AMR. WAAW was held from 18-24 November this year.

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