

24th April, 2021

Through e-Mail

**Shri. Prakash Javadekar,
Union Minister for Information & Broadcasting
Government of India.**

Subject: Media needs to focus on the positive side too during COVID-21

Respected Sir,

We at the Health Parliament- A think Tank on Evidence-Based Policymaking, would like to draw your attention towards the out-of-proportion media coverage focusing on negativity, fear and sadness induced due to constant news about corona cases, deaths and inadequate medical supply.

Considering the overall situation and the number of calls and messages that we received from people, we have been carefully monitoring the coverage of COVID-21 that has been overly put negativity on top of the unprecedented pandemic crises. While we truly understand that we could have been better prepared, never the less a pandemic of this scale and scope can overthrow the best-prepared systems in jeopardy. Now that we have come to this situation, we have to face it, fight it and overcome it together. We had a discussion with stakeholders, including top experts in mental health, behavioral sciences and media professionals. We are sharing a few suggestions for your kind considerations:

- Print media should have a dedicated section for COVID-21 related news, and this section should also include the positive achievements and the efforts from public, private, NGOs and individuals of how they are making a positive difference
- The reporting should be factual and highlighting the positive news on the top. The continuous bombarding of negative news is creating an anxiety and panicking situation amongst people and breaking their confidence. This will lead to Post-COVID Traumatic Disorder (PCTD). In any ways, the Ministry of Health should be working on this program. We at Health Parliament, are already working on the guidelines for child health. We shall be separately making recommendations on the Children's Mental Health Program
- Media should focus more on positive news, like recovery of patients, how to manage COVID-21 and innovative approaches besides other positive aspects of managing in the current times
- Media should also cover the availability of medical supplies and infrastructure than scarcity and the steps taken by the private sector and the government.
- Highlighting the number of people getting vaccinated everyday and encouraging more and more people to get vaccinated
- Also, it is timely to conduct a quick study of people following COVID protocols and who have not contracted COVID. This will ensure and encourage people to follow COVID related guidelines and help in the containment of the spread

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- Covering inspiring stories from people who are helping in the community.
- Focusing on stories of people who have recovered

We had a discussion with Dr. Nimesh G Desai, the country's top psychiatrist, behavioral scientist, and Director of IHBAS, on 23rd April 2021, who has extensive experience in helping communities during the massive earthquake in Gujarat. He also emphasized the importance of having faith in science and keep focusing on the brighter side for better outcomes, and the sensitivity of the broadcasting fraternity to focus on the positive stories as well.

The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare may also consider providing a written statement to media daily on the actual status of the situation.

Also, the National Health Portal (www.nhp.gov.in) developed by the MOHFW can be used to disseminate updated information and share relevant material for managing COVID-21.

The current scenario is critical and we need to put systems together to build confidence of our people so that they can cope with this pandemic situation with positivity and hope which is the dire need of this hour.

We hope you will consider our submissions and take appropriate actions.

As always, we remain at your disposal for any further details or clarification and support.

Best regards,



Dr. Himadri Bisht

Health Parliament

CC:

Shri. Narendra Modi ji, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India.

Union Health Minister, Government of India.

Editors Guild of India.

Prof. Rajendra Pratap Gupta, Founder & Chairman- Health Parliament

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