

Press Release by the Indian Scientists' Response to CoViD-19 (ISRC) Group

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Keeping safe: body and mind

While the country eases lockdown norms and more people move about as economic activity resumes, people need to keep themselves and their families safe. This calls for not only physical practices such as maintaining distancing, mask wearing, hand-washing (with soap) and cleaning surfaces, but also for maintaining healthy attitudes. Anxiety towards infection breeds anger towards those who may be infected, and guilt in those who do get infected, and existing structures of social inequality deepen these further, leading to stigmatization. In an interview with ISRC, Dr. T Sundararaman, former Dean, School of health system studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, talks of the cultural roots of stigmatization, and points out: "It is the virus that causes the disease, not contact. Physical distancing only helps to minimize risk. Catching an infection and getting cured is a natural process, a part of life." ISRC has initiated a series of interviews with experts to deepen public understanding on issues related to Covid-19.

ISRC presents new series of resources on **Mental Health** and **Discrimination**. The fear of contracting the virus, along with managing the impact of physical distancing, can affect various aspects of mental health. "Factors such as economic conditions, migration issues, abusive home environments, limited access to essential resources, differences in gender expectations, and the struggle with managing family, home and work without previously available support, can further compound the current stress experienced by individuals," says Avantika Bhatia, Assistant Professor of Psychology at Ashoka University, involved in this ISRC effort. Through this series, we attempt to create awareness of and provide resources for mental health concerns of certain populations such as the elderly, who might be at greater risk of developing mental health concerns of greater severity.

The **Daily Life and CoViD-19** series presents illustrated stories of families who are trying to keep themselves and their communities safe, some of them narrated on audio by experienced storytellers. "Reaching out to people through the medium of storytelling underscores my belief in the immense power of stories as a teaching tool. It is also an example of how science and art come together to reach out to people of all ages." Says Deeptha Vivekanad, a professional storyteller at *Ever After Learning*.

"It is heartwarming to see the collaborations between scientists and professional designers and amateur illustrators from across the country who have been ready and willing to spend time working on developing these resources for the general public", says Ipsa Jain, a freelance science visualizer. Meanwhile, as we debunk some items of misinformation, more appear. Poorti Kathpalia, freelance science communicator at *Science Bagels* and Ramya Setty from *Just A Thought* lead the effort for creatively presenting factual news about the ongoing pandemic on our YouTube channel.

The resources are presented in multiple Indian languages, not only in the form of stories with audio narrations and infographics, but also in video formats along with voice overs.

General ISRC Resources for the Media and Public

Indian Scientists' Response to CoViD-19 Website

<https://indscicov.in/>

Hoax Busters & Be Covid wise Website

<https://indscicov.in/busting-hoaxes/>

<https://indscicov.in/qnacovid/>

Daily Life and COVID - 19

<https://indscicov.in/popularization-resources/>

Mental Health and Discrimination

<https://indscicov.in/mental-health-during-covid/>

<https://indscicov.in/covid-19-and-societal-issues/>

ISRC YouTube Channel

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCiBKoITAvx1_aZq1oeGcZhw
