

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

**8 June, 2020**

### **The need for reliable data**

The death rate due to CoViD-19 is considered to be low in India but many experts in public health have pointed to the importance of time-lags that are neglected in current official calculations of the fatality rate. There are also concerns that the number of deaths might not be well documented and that the number of infections might be severely underestimated. Moreover for purposes of public health, the overall figures for the country are of little relevance, since action needs to be focussed locally. These were among the points made in the [Second ISRC symposium on analysing Covid19 data in the Indian context](#), held on June 6. It focused on what kind of epidemiological data is available and what is needed, and what we could learn from the analysis of such data.

*Dr Rakhal Gaitonde* (SCTIMST, Thiruvananthapuram) spoke from the vantage point of being part of a committee advising the Kerala government on its COVID-19 response. He pointed out that the way questions are framed is critical and that data needs are different in the early and later stages of the pandemic. *Dr T Sundararaman* (JIPMER, NHSRC, TISS — ret'd) talked about how, by not using the existing Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), the country lost out on valuable clinical data that could have helped in managing CoViD-19. *Dr Bhramar Mukherjee* (University of Michigan) presented a dynamic dashboard for policymakers to evaluate state-wide and national data in terms of multiple public health and policy relevant metrics. *Dr Giridhar Babu* (Public Health Foundation of India) discussed the relevance and limitations of available indicators, and the analysis required for improving the public health response. The open discussion, initiated by *Dr Girija Vaidyanathan* (former Chief Secretary, Govt of Tamil Nadu), stressed the need for data transparency and identification of parameters on which data is needed.

While CoViD-19 commands our attention, Non-Covid emergencies cannot be neglected. The group Project Mumbai (<https://projectmumbai.org/>) has launched a website to track the availability of various hospital facilities for **Non-Covid emergencies** in different hospitals in Mumbai: <https://projectmumbai.org/non-covid-hospitals/> . The effort is driven by a team of volunteers and ISRC is a technical partner in this project.

ISRC continues its **Webinars** addressing various aspects of our response to CoViD-19: Dr Sanjeev Jain of NIMHANS, Bengaluru discussed its impact on mental health, and Dr Janhavi Phalkey of Science Gallery, Bengaluru spoke on public engagement with science in times of pandemic. ISRC **call-in sessions** in *Indian languages* continue the conversations between scientists and the general public, while the ISRC website provides a range of resources for the public as well as public health professionals.

## **General ISRC Resources for the Media and Public**

Indian Scientists' Response to CoViD-19 Website

<https://indscicov.in/>

Sunday Webinars and Ask a Scientist call-in series

<https://indscicov.in/category/events>

Second ISRC symposium on analysing Covid19 data in the Indian context

<https://indscicov.in/online-symposium-2-data-analysis/>

Hoax Busters, Be Covid wise

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

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

Daily Life and COVID - 19

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

Mental Health

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

Modelling

<https://indscicov.in/daily-dashboard/>

<https://indscicov.in/online-symposium-modelling/>

<https://indscicov.in/indscisim>

<https://indscicov.in/explaining-models/>

## **ISRC YouTube Channel**

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCiBKoITAvx1\\_aZq1oeGcZhw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCiBKoITAvx1_aZq1oeGcZhw)

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