

Lockdowns alone can't be effective unless combined with other health measures, says the WHO Chief Scientist

Early in April, Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, the Chief Scientist of the World Health Organisation told media that the fight against COVID-19 can not be tackled by lock-downs alone. Dr Swaminathan said, "It cannot be effective unless combined with other public health measures is likely to be long-term". She asked, "What do we know so far about how SARS-CoV-2 is spreading around the world? Is there evidence to suggest a variance in its virulence in different countries?"



She the previous Secretary to the Government of India for Health Research and Director General of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) from 2015 to 2017, Dr. Swaminathan has worked in research on tuberculosis and HIV for 30 years.

She has insisted that obtaining and analysing data are critical. She explained that viral evolution and transmission dynamics can be studied by analysing genetic sequence data. The viral sequences were obtained from China through the GISAID platform, which was set up 10 years ago for influenza sequence sharing, and since then, many countries have provided sequence data as it became available.

According to her, there are over 4,500 viral sequences currently deposited, with around 10 Indian strains in this database. What we see is, that over time, there is some

variability in the strains. That is to be expected, as all viruses develop mutations as they transmit from person to person.

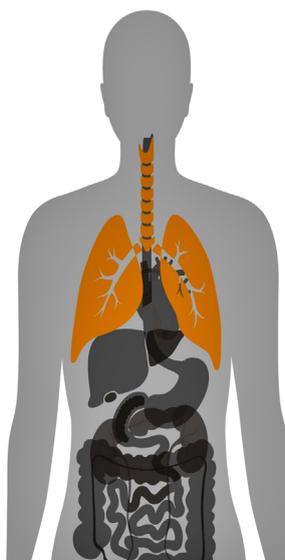
Her concerns are that what is not being observed so far is any mutation on any of the important sites of the virus, such as the spike protein or in the RNA polymerase or protease enzymes, which are relevant for drug targeting and vaccines.

In a phone interview with the Hindustan Times, she was reported to have said, "India, for now, is doing enough testing, but will have to scale it up as the numbers rise".

Dr Swaminathan, is leading the global partnerships on scientific research on vaccine and drug therapies for the infection. She said that India cannot depend on rapid antibody tests of unproven quality for coronavirus disease (Covid-19) diagnosis and molecular tests remain the gold standard.

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC COVID-19

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by SARS-CoV-2, a new type of coronavirus detected in China in late 2019.



Data shows the disease is mild in 80 percent of patients, severe in 13 percent, and critical in 6 percent.

Most common symptoms:

-  Fever
-  Fatigue
-  Dry cough

Some patients may also have:

-  Aches and pains
-  Runny nose
-  Sore throat
-  Shortness of breath
-  Diarrhoea

In critical cases, COVID-19 can cause severe pneumonia or a multiple-organ failure and can lead to death.



Source: World Health Organization | Last updated: March 12, 2020

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A donation from Sigma Pharmaceuticals plc is funding a three year PhD scholarship

The scholarship funded by Sigma Pharmaceuticals is aimed at developing a coherent and transformative vision for English community pharmacy in 2025.

The project has already begun in the Department of Pharmacy & Pharmacology at the University of Bath. The donor, Sigma Pharmaceuticals plc through Dr Bharat Shah, is keen to draw together the various sectors of the profession to present a clear and cogent message to policy-makers. This work will devise and present a vision for the development of the community pharmacy sector as it battles to respond to funding cuts and unpopular reforms.

The work will involve gathering of opinions from all the stakeholders in the healthcare sector.