**Manuscript evaluation guidelines**Title: Healthcare workers in an Indian state and their top of the range ethical dilemmas in COVID-19: Perspectives of a practitioner and student of public health  
  
1. Importance of the paper  
  
           Does it address issues relevant to the fields of bioethics and medical ethics in the developing countries?

The paper does address the issues of bioethics amongst the healthcare workers in India. However, the arguments are incoherent and generic. The authors do a good job of voicing the concerns from the field but fail to build up on any of them. They jump from one ethical conundrum to another without delving into any of them which does a disservice to those ethical dilemmas. India’s health care is struggling right now and I can imagine that the ethical questions have become more complex than ever. If the authors would have picked up one or two cases and then explored the bioethics in those, that would have added to my knowledge set as a reader. I fail to see how just mentioning the dilemmas, which I read in newspapers/TV news daily, will add to the existing literature.

2. Is it topical?  
  
           Is the issue discussed from another country's/culture perspective?

No.  
  
           Will it influence practice or policy?

In the current form, this will not change practice/policy.  
  
           Is it too specialized for the journal?

No, it is not.  
  
3. Originality  
  
           Is the information /comment new?

The information/comment is not new. The concerns that the authors have raised are very generic ones and were true in the pre-COVID era as well. The manuscript provide very little new information, if at all.

Is there any likelihood of plagiarism?

I don’t think there is a likelihood of plagiarism.  
  
  
4. Conclusions  
           Is the interpretation warranted, unwarranted, well developed?

The interpretation/recommendations are vague and not in alignment with the problems/ethical issues posed.  
  
           Does the article contain loose generalisations?

No  
  
           Are there any important omissions?

No  
  
  
5. Other comments

Please see the recommendation section.  
  
  
6. Recommendation  
  
 Accept as is  
  
 Accept with modifications (specify)  
  
 - style: The style should be changed to a case based discussion rather than general commentary to gather more detailed insight on what ethical issues are being raised specifically related to COVID19. The authors switch from active voice to passive voice and present tense to past tense quite often breaking the continuity of the argument. (Mentioned specifically at places in the manuscript document)

- substance: The authors make statements like ‘logistics and ethics don’t go hand in hand’ and ‘things need to be done within ethical standards’ but, there is no insight into how to do that. As the public health personnel, I would have expected that authors throw a lot more light, especially in the current pandemic context, on what are the ethical standards to be followed, how the ethical standards get manipulated in an emergency situation, who decides what changes should be made – is it the doctors, the management, the government or the public and is there a set of guidelines/protocols that can help us during such a time.

Most of the problems/ethical issues the authors have raised were pertinent even in the pre-COVID era and will continue to be such after the pandemic is over. For example – Personal protective equipment not being available, crumbling health systems particularly in rural India, political will deciding who gets what, junior doctors treating the patients but senior doctors taking the credit, doctors and nurses scared about personal safety, disrespect and violence towards healthcare workers, general population not being sensitized to the struggles of health care workers, lack of compassion and sensitivity towards health care workers. Every single one of these issues is something we, as health care workers, have known and have been dealing with for the longest. The COVID pandemic has worsened some of these, true, but I fail to see how any of these are ‘new’ ethical dilemmas in the COVID era.

Furthermore, the recommendations that the authors provide do not align with the problem statements they have made in the earlier section. The recommendations (how the state should respond) consist of transparency in decision making, declaring COVID hotspots in the country and making the population listen to the government to follow rules. I, again, fail to see how these recommendations are directly related to the multitude of ethical questions authors have posed.   
  
  
7. Separate comments for the author

I want to thank the authors for choosing to voice very important concerns of health care workers that has been compounded with the current COVID-19 pandemic. We need field stories to assess the situation on the ground and that is what I was expecting from the manuscript based on the title. But, I was a little disappointed to see the generic ‘newspaper/TV news headline’ kind of statements made with little substantiation. It would have been more insightful if the authors would have picked one or two case studies that they witnessed/heard about and wrote about the specific ethical conundrums that were faced to deal with the case/s. For example, if the authors were to deep dive into the story of the two doctors who died and the cremation did not happen, and expanded on that capturing multiple perspectives (the family of the doctors, the public, the medical fraternity) and identified specific ethical conundrums and discussed about those – that would provide us with the knowledge that is largely lacking.

I would suggest authors to read the following two articles to help build up their arguments and recommendations in a more definitive way;

1. Ethical dilemmas faced by health care workers during COVID-19 pandemic: Issues, implications and suggestions by Vikas Menona and Susanta Kumar Padhy
2. Ethics in the Time of Coronavirus: Recommendations in the COVID-19 Pandemic by Jessica B Kramer, MD, Douglas E Brown, PhD, Piroska K Kopar, MD

Thank you again for choosing to write this piece and good luck!

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\***Please let us know whether you would like your name to be published as a reviewer of the manuscript. This is optional.**