**Advisory for Senior Citizens during Covid-19 by Government of India : A comment**

Dear Editor,

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India issued an advisory for Senior Citizens during Covid- 19, dated 27th April 2021.(1) The advisory has certain Do’s and Don’ts for the citizens. It states that as the senior citizens face an increased risk in Covid times, they need to observe certain precautions, along with their caregivers. This advisory is sent to various Medical Colleges, Universities and other Institutions serving geriatric population.

However, these precautions don’t match with respect to emerging evidence regarding risk of transmission and methods of their mitigation. Under a heading of don’ts, it advises senior citizens not to visit parks. Although various researchers are highlighting since mid-last year that primary mode of transmission of SARS-CoV-2 is airborne route, still a large part of scholarship is stuck with droplets and fomites.(2) This advisory too at several places mentions droplets, sanitization, (infected) surfaces and fomites but anything like ventilation, aerosol and indoor gathering is inconspicuous.

Logic behind sanitization and cleaning surfaces and fomites is that while speaking, some droplets -which may be visible- drop around the speakers at a maximum distance of 6 feet or so and as these are infectious, one needs to avoid contact with it by cleaning surfaces, fomites and also your hands. Therefore, if we practice these hygienic measures, we may ward off the virus.(3) But after analysing various superspreading events around the globe last year, evidence is emerging that all of them took place indoors- many when the participants observed more than the recommended distance previously mentioned. Another stark example is that of cruise ship – Diamond Princess- where several patrons got infected in a controlled atmosphere although many did not have any contact with the cases.

Subsequently in July last year, 239 scientists sent a letter to World Health Organization to recognize this entity. But still confusion prevails, setting our priorities wrong. If we recognize this mode, we will advise people to increase ventilation of their homes- especially when it’s a part of some complex. As surfaces are not likely to play a significant role when instead of droplets, aerosol is the primary carrier of the virus, we need not to direct our efforts on this maneuver. As the advisory mentions sanitization at several places, we need to realize that our limited attention gets directed to the most useful procedure of opening windows -and not elsewhere.(4)

When an English Mathematician, Isaac Newton (1642-1727), gave his theory of gravity, we had a realization that the whole universe follows this law and planets revolve around the Sun due to gravitational force. But when a German- borne theoretical physicist, Albert Einstein, a Nobel Laureate, came up with his idea of twisting of space -time due to heavy astronomical objects like Sun and falling of planets in this twist (curve), it still intrigues many. However, we can explain different speeds of time in different parts of universe only with latter esoteric theory. Similarly, no one has seen an atom or an electron - neither can- but today we manufacture several highly sophisticated objects on atomic and electronic theory- which actually work. Hence, we need to realize that something which eludes our usual senses, something beyond our day-to-day experiences may be correct. While looking back at this history, we’d realise that If aerosol is not visible- unlike droplets- still they may- and do- play far more important role in disease propagation than visible objects.

Second, the advisory gives certain instructions to NGOs running Old Age Homes/ Senior Citizens Homes. Here the Ministry enlists certain symptoms which may indicate further evaluation. It includes the symptoms as common as cough, fever, shortness of breath etc. However oddly enough, increase in respiratory rate is missing in the document- something which is important (5,6) and can be easily counted even by a layperson. Just place your hand on the chest of a senior citizen and count that how many times it rises (or falls) in 60 seconds. If the rate is high, it may (or may not) indicate an early sign of infection and may warrant further evaluation. Hence, I propose addition of this sign in the list.

**References-**

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I accessed all the webpages while submitting this letter to the Editor.