Himachal medical colleges

Himachal medical colleges lose senior faculty to AIIMS
IGMC-Shimla set to lose at least five senior faculty members (The Tribune: 20220606)


Indira Gandhi Medical College and Hospital (IGMC) is set to lose at least five senior faculty members to the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences, Bilaspur, shortly. These doctors, along with a few others from other medical colleges in the state, were selected for AIIMS recently.

“Losing senior faculty members will affect the institution’s functioning. The impact will be felt more in smaller departments,” said IGMC Principal Surinder Singh. Earlier, two senior faculty members had left IGMC’s nephrology department over a year back to join AIIMS. The department is still struggling to get back on its feet with just one assistant professor handling its affairs.

Similarly, the departments of physiology and hospital administration at Dr Rajendra Prasad Government Medical College, Tanda, are yet to recover from the loss of faculty members to AIIMS.

“We have still not got any replacement for the doctors who left,” said Principal Bhanu Awasthi. In the fresh round of interviews at AIIMS, two more doctors from Tanda were selected. “We have enough strength in the departments from where doctors have been selected this time,” said Awasthi.

The trend of doctors leaving medical colleges to join AIIMS has left the state medical fraternity worried about its impact on medical colleges. “Most of the colleges are already short on faculty. Taking doctors from there will hamper the services,” said a senior doctor. “Also, what different will AIIMS offer if most of the doctors are picked from our own medical colleges. It would have been better if most of the faculty was brought from outside,” he said.
Meanwhile, another section feels there is nothing wrong in doctors opting for a higher institution. “AIIMS offers better pay, incentives and other facilities. Everyone has the right to explore possibilities for career progression,” said Dr Pushpender Verma, secretary, Himachal Medical Officers Association. “It is the responsibility of the government to arrange the replacement. The government is not offering time-bound promotions. Had it done so, there would not have been much problem,” said Verma.

No replacement, working affected

5 senior faculty members from IGMC chosen for AIIMS, Bilaspur
Two from IGMC’s nephrology department had left last year
Some docs from Tanda college too left for AIIMS recently
Colleges rue despite shortage, govt failed to give replacement

Breast cancer drug

Breast cancer drug could help more patients: Researchers
In the new study, the drug lengthened the time patients lived without their cancer progressing and improved survival compared with patients given standard chemotherapy (The Tribune: 20220606)


For the first time, a drug targeting a protein that drives breast cancer growth has been shown to work against tumours with very low levels of the protein.

It’s not a cure. But this latest gain for targeted cancer therapy could open new treatment possibilities to thousands of patients with advanced breast cancer.

Until now, breast cancers have been categorized as either HER2-positive — the cancer cells have more of the protein than normal — or HER2-negative. Doctors reporting the advance Sunday said it will make “HER2-low” a new category for guiding breast cancer treatment.

About half of patients with late-stage breast cancer formerly categorized as HER2-negative may actually be HER2-low and eligible for the drug.

The drug is Enhertu, an antibody-chemotherapy combo given by IV. It finds and blocks the HER2 protein on cancer cells, while also unloading a powerful cancer-killing chemical inside those cells. It belongs to a relatively new class of drugs called antibody-drug conjugates.

The drug was already approved for HER2-positive breast cancer, and in April the Food and Drug Administration granted it breakthrough status for this new group of patients.
In the new study, the drug lengthened the time patients lived without their cancer progressing and improved survival compared with patients given standard chemotherapy.

The study compared Enhertu to standard chemo in about 500 patients with HER2-low breast cancer that had spread or could not be treated with surgery. The drug stopped the progress of cancer for about 10 months compared with about 5½ months in the group getting regular care. The drug improved survival by about six months (from 17.5 months to 23.9 months).

“It’s a practice-changing study,” said Dr. Sylvia Adams, who directs breast cancer care at NYU Langone Health and enrolled several patients in the study. “It addresses a major unmet need for patients who have metastatic breast cancer.” Now, it will be important to define the HER2 gray area to make sure the right patients receive the treatment and then to monitor them closely, experts said.

The drug, which costs about USD 14,000 a month, can have severe complications.

Three patients in the study died of a lung disease that’s a known hazard of the drug. Doctors need to make sure patients report breathing problems right away so the drug can be stopped and patients treated with steroids.

The findings were featured Sunday at the annual meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology in Chicago and published by the New England Journal of Medicine. Funding for the study came from Tokyo-based Daiichi Sankyo and UK-based AstraZeneca, which jointly developed the drug.

Patients take the drug until they can no longer tolerate it.

**Aerobic exercise**

**Aerobic exercise may help boost immune system against cancer: Study**

Exercise-induced increases in levels of the hormone adrenaline cause changes to the immune system, according to researchers(The Tribune: 20220606)


Aerobic exercise, which includes brisk walking, swimming, running, or cycling, can help reprogramme the immune system to reduce tumour growth and amplify the effects of immunotherapy, finds a new study.
Published online in Cancer Cell, the study, which focussed on pancreatic cancer, provides new insight into how the mammalian immune system, designed to attack foreign invaders like bacteria, can also recognise cancer cells as abnormal.

Exercise-induced increases in levels of the hormone adrenaline cause changes to the immune system, according to researchers at New York University.

It includes the activity of cells that respond to signalling protein interleukin-15 (IL-15).

The study found that exercise promotes the survival of CD8 T cells sensitive to IL-15, and doubles the number of them homing to pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma (PDAC) tumours in mice.

Such "effector" T cells have been shown by other studies to be capable of killing cancer cells. Other tests found that aerobic exercise for 30 minutes five times a week reduced the rate of cancer formation by 50 per cent in one mouse model of PDAC, and reduced tumour weight by 25 per cent in another model, in which mice ran on treadmills for three weeks.

In collaboration with The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, the study authors then found that human patients who exercised before surgery to remove their pancreatic tumours had more CD8 effector T cells that expressed a protein called granzyme B, which confers tumour-cell killing ability.

Patients who exercised and had more of these cell types, had 50 per cent higher overall survival over five years than patients with fewer of them.

"Our findings show, for the first time, how aerobic exercise affects the immune microenvironment within pancreatic tumours," said first author Emma Kurz, a graduate student at NYU Grossman School of Medicine.

"The work helped to reveal that activation of IL-15 signalling in pancreatic cancer might be an important treatment approach in the future." IANS

*Diabetes*

**Decoded: Why not all obese patients develop diabetes**

Their gut bacteria have a role to play(The Tribune: 20220606)


Decoded: Why not all obese patients develop diabetes
The human gut microbiome features more than 10 trillion microbial cells from about 1,000 different bacterial species. iStock

New York, June 5

Obesity, often a result of eating too much fat and sugar in combination with low physical activity, is known as a key factor for developing Type 2 diabetes. However, some obese people do not develop the disease that affect millions globally. Turns out their gut bacteria have a role to play.

Andrey Morgun and Natalia Shulzhenko of Oregon State University and Giorgio Trinchieri of the National Cancer Institute developed a novel analytical technique, multi-organ network analysis, to explore the mechanisms behind early-stage systemic insulin resistance.

The findings, published in the Journal of Experimental Medicine, showed that a particular type of gut microbe leads to white adipose tissue containing macrophage cells, large cells that are part of the immune system, associated with insulin resistance.

In the human body, white adipose tissue is the main type of fat.

"Our experiments and analysis predict that a high-fat/high-sugar diet primarily acts in white adipose tissue by driving microbiota-related damage to the energy synthesis process, leading to systemic insulin resistance," said Morgun, associate professor of pharmaceutical sciences in the OSU College of Pharmacy.

"Treatments that modify a patient's microbiota in ways that target insulin resistance in adipose tissue macrophage cells could be a new therapeutic strategy for Type 2 diabetes," he added.

The human gut microbiome features more than 10 trillion microbial cells from about 1,000 different bacterial species.

"The so-called 'western diet', high in saturated fats and refined sugars, is one of the primary factors. But gut bacteria have an important role to play in mediating the effects of diet," Shulzhenko said.

Experiments in mice, looking at the intestine, liver, muscle and white adipose tissue, the team found "adipose tissue has a predominant role in systemic insulin resistance".

Further they "discovered that the Oscillibacter microbe, enriched by a western diet, causes an increase of the insulin-resistant adipose tissue macrophage".

The researchers add, however, that Oscillibacter is likely not the only microbial regulator for expression of the key gene they identified, Mmp12, and that the Mmp12 pathway, while clearly instrumental, is probably not the only important pathway, depending on which gut microbes are present.

Previously studies have shown that another microbial species "Romboutsia ilealis worsens glucose tolerance by inhibiting insulin levels, which may be relevant to more advanced stages of Type 2 diabetes", Shulzhenko said. IANS
Sleeping

New self-powering smart pillow to help track sleep quality

Chinese researchers have developed a self-powering smart pillow that tracks the position of the head and quality of sleep.

Studies have linked chronic lack of sleep to physical ailments, such as diabetes and heart disease, as well as mental health issues.

People who are interested in getting a better handle on what's happening to them at night have two primary options. They can take a sleep test conducted in a medical facility, or they can use an app through a smartphone or smart watch - a much more convenient, but less accurate choice.

Recognising the need, many researchers have begun developing new sleep monitoring systems using triboelectric nanogenerators (TENGs).

These self-powering systems have taken the form of eye masks, belts, patches and even bed sheets.

Researchers from Guangxi University and Chinese Academy of Sciences wanted to adapt this approach to create a less restrictive, more comfortable version that focuses on the movement of the head during sleep.

To construct this new smart pillow, the team formulated a flexible, porous polymer triboelectric layer.

Movement between the head and this layer changes the electric field around nearby electrodes, generating a current. They strung together several of these self-powering sensors to create a flexible and breathable TENG (FB-TENG) array that can be placed atop an ordinary pillow.

This system could generate voltage that corresponded to the amount of applied pressure, and it could track the movement of a finger tracing out letters.
Climate change poses serious risks to mental health and well-being, and thus countries must make it a priority while taking efforts to tackle the climate crisis, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Friday.

According to a recent report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), rapidly increasing climate change poses a rising threat to mental health and psychosocial well-being - ranging from emotional distress to anxiety, depression, grief, and suicidal behavior.

"The impacts of climate change are increasingly part of our daily lives, and there is very little dedicated mental health support available for people and communities dealing with climate-related hazards and long-term risk," said Dr Maria Neira, Director of the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Health at WHO, in a statement.

Mental health conditions already represent a significant burden worldwide. There are nearly one billion people living with mental health conditions, yet in low- and middle-income countries, three out of four do not have access to needed services.

The WHO noted that these figures will be exacerbated by the climate crisis. It urged countries to ramp up mental health and psychosocial support within disaster risk reduction and climate action to help protect those most at risk.

A 2021 WHO survey of 95 countries found that only nine have thus far included mental health and psychosocial support in their national health and climate change plans.

The WHO on Friday also released a policy brief at the Stockholm+50 conference in Sweden. It recommends five important approaches for governments to address the mental health impacts of climate change: integrate climate considerations with mental health programmes; integrate mental health support with climate action; build upon global commitments; develop community-based approaches to reduce vulnerabilities; and close the large funding gap that exists for mental health and psychosocial support.
The Stockholm Conference commemorates the 50th anniversary of the UN Conference on the Human Environment and recognises the importance of environmental determinants for both physical and mental health.

**Monkeypox cases**

**Monkeypox cases: 21-day check on incoming flyers (The Tribune: 20220606)**


With monkeypox cases rising in non-endemic nations, the government on Tuesday issued guidelines to states and UTs for case management asking for asymptomatic arrivals from countries reporting the disease to be observed for 21 days for the development of any potential symptoms.

The disease presents itself between six and 21 days. Samples from symptomatic cases would need to be collected upon arrival and sent to apex lab ICMR- National Institute of Virology, Pune, for confirmation.

India has no reported case of monkeypox so far. The government has, however, asked states to maintain caution and prepare ahead.

The WHO has confirmed transmission of monkeypox in non-endemic Europe with no epidemiological links to West or Central Africa where Monkeypox is usually found.

**Yoga and Physical Fitness**

**Women should exercise in the morning, men in evening: Study Researchers show that all participants in the study improved in overall health and performance over the course of the trial, irrespective of their allocation to morning or evening exercise(The Tribune: 20220606)**


It has been traditionally said exercising is more beneficial during morning hours. Turns out, the effectiveness of exercise depends on sex, according to a study.

The study, published in Frontiers in Physiology, showed that for women doing exercise during the morning hours is more beneficial for health and for men the optimal time is evening.
While exercise during any time helped females to reduce their total body fat, abdominal and hip fat, and blood pressure, these improvements were greater in morning-exercising women.

On the contrary, only evening-exercising in men showed a decrease in their ratio of total to HDL cholesterol, blood pressure, respiratory exchange ratio, and carbohydrate oxidation, as fat became the preferred fuel source, the study revealed.

"Here we show for the first time that for women, exercise during the morning reduces belly fat and blood pressure, whereas evening exercise in women increases upper body muscular strength, power, and endurance, and improves overall mood and nutritional satiety," said Dr Paul J Arciero, Professor at the Health and Human Physiological Sciences Department of Skidmore College in New York.

"We also show that for men, evening exercise lowers blood pressure, the risk of heart disease, and feelings of fatigue, and burns more fat, compared to morning exercise," he added.

For the study, the team recruited 30 women and 26 men to participate. All were between 25 and 55 years old, healthy, highly active, nonsmokers, and with normal weight, who were trained over 12 weeks at different times of the day.

The researchers show that all participants improved in overall health and performance over the course of the trial, irrespective of their allocation to morning or evening exercise.

"Our study clearly demonstrates the benefits of both morning and evening multimodal exercise to improve cardiometabolic and mood health, as well as physical performance outcomes in women and men," said Arciero.

But crucially, they also showed that exercise time of day determines the strength of improvements in physical performance, body composition, cardiometabolic health, and mood.

"Based on our findings, women interested in reducing belly fat and blood pressure, while at the same time increasing leg muscle power should consider exercising in the morning. However, women interested in gaining upper body muscle strength, power and endurance, as well as improving overall mood state and food intake, evening exercise is the preferred choice," said Arciero.

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**Health Care**

**Now, higher penalty for Haryana govt doctors leaving service midway**

**Bid to retain super-specialists in health sector (The Tribune: 20220606)**

Now, higher penalty for Haryana govt doctors leaving service midway
Tribune News Service

In a bid to retain super-specialists in the government health sector, the state has significantly hiked the penalty for the doctors leaving service before the term of the bond ends.

Under the new postgraduate policy to be implemented from 2022-23, doctors granted no-objection certificate (NOC) will have to execute a bond with the Health Department to pursue a course with full pay. After the completion of the super-speciality course (DM), the doctor will serve in the Health Department for a minimum period of seven years or will have to shell out Rs 1.5 crore for his failure to honour this commitment, the policy asserted.

In case of postgraduate degree courses, the doctors will have to serve the department for at least seven years or pay Rs 1 crore penalty to the state government. For doctors completing diploma courses, the minimum period for serving the government will be five years and Rs 65 lakh penalty in case of default.

Doctors granted NOC without pay for the super-speciality courses will also have to execute a bond to serve the department for five years or pay Rs 1 crore in case of failure to do so.

And for postgraduate courses, the doctors will have to serve the department for five years or pay Rs 75 lakh penalty. For the diploma course, a doctor needs to serve the government for at least five years or Rs 45 lakh fine.

Earlier, the doctors doing PG courses (both super-speciality and PG) with full pay had to serve the government for a minimum period of seven years while the penalty amount was Rs 50 lakh. For diploma course, the minimum period for government service was five years or Rs 35 lakh penalty.

Similarly, for doctors pursuing postgraduate courses without pay, the minimum period for government service was five years or Rs 35 lakh fine. For diploma course, the period was four years and Rs 25 lakh penalty.

Meanwhile, a two-year stint in the health institutions in the remote and difficult areas will be a must for the government doctors wanting to pursue postgraduate degrees such as DM/MS with full pay. Other eligible doctors will pursue the PG courses without pay.
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Healthy lifestyle

Healthy lifestyle: How you can bring your circadian rhythm back on track
Circadian rhythm tells your body when to get up and get out of bed, sleep, eat and even ovulate, says nutritionist Bhakti Kapoor (The Indian Express: 20220606)

https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/health/healthy-lifestyle-circadian-rhythm-on-track-internal-clock-health-7950398/

circadian rhythm, what is circadian rhythm, maintaining circadian rhythm, what you can do for circadian rhythm, healthy circadian rhythm, biological clock, internal clock, indian express news
Some people have an unhealthy circadian rhythm born of poor habits or biological differences, says an expert. (Photo: Getty/Thinkstock)
Owing to stressful lives, long working hours and the need to feel gratified by technology, we end up spending a big chunk of our sleeping time staring at screens, resulting in reduced sleep and an overall unhealthy life.

Maternal and baby health

Indian heatwaves threaten maternal and baby health
Soaring temperatures can lead to more preterm and stillbirths. But experts say awareness of the risk of heat during pregnancy is low, with more research needed into impacts on the world's most vulnerable women (The Indian Express: 20220606)


In the final weeks of her pregnancy, Babita Baswal says that when heat gets too intense, she gets dizzy and sick (DW)
Soaring temperatures can lead to more preterm and stillbirths. But experts say awareness of the risk of heat during pregnancy is low, with more research needed into impacts on the world’s most vulnerable women.
The heatwave that swept across South Asia in April could not have come at a worse time for Babita Baswal. At nine months pregnant, the 32-year-old struggled with nausea and fatigue, as temperatures in Delhi soared to highs of 49 degrees Celsius (120 Fahrenheit).

After a particularly violent bout of vomiting, Baswal checked herself in to Safdarjung Hospital, where she was diagnosed with extreme dehydration.
Dr. Ana, an obstetrician at the hospital who focuses on high-risk pregnancies, says that in recent weeks, many of the pregnant women in the maternity unit have been facing similar issues.

“Most of them are dehydrated, they’re sweating, they’re tachycardic,” she says, a reference to how they have a heart rate of over 100 beats per minute. “But they don’t complain because in our scenario it’s such a common thing.”

Heatwaves in India are indeed a common occurrence, but this year the staggering temperatures came earlier than usual, hitting record-breaking highs well before summer. Northwest and central India experienced their hottest April in 122 years, according to the Indian Meteorological Department.

The unusual weather is “consistent with what we expect in a changing climate,” World Meteorological Organization Secretary-General Petteri Taalas said in a statement in May.

With climate change exacerbating extreme heat in many parts of the world, experts warn that the impact on maternal and neonatal health could be devastating.

“We do see a lot of cases of oligohydramnios — that is decreased [amniotic] fluid around the baby — preterm births, higher incidence of women going into preterm labor, in the summer months,” says Dr. Karishma Thariani, a specialist in high-risk obstetrics who works as a consultant at Indian maternal health non-profit ARMMAN. “And summer months in India are becoming worse.”

Heatwaves threaten unborn children
Meta-analysis of 70 studies into the effects of heatwaves on pregnant women found that for every 1-degree Celsius temperature rise, the risk of both premature and stillbirths rose by 5%. One Australian study reviewed found a 46% increase in stillbirths during heatwaves, and most found a link between heat exposure during pregnancy and low birth weight.

“There are a lot of cases of oligohydramnios — that is decreased [amniotic] fluid around the baby — preterm births, higher incidence of women going into preterm labor, in the summer months,” says Dr. Karishma Thariani, a specialist in high-risk obstetrics who works as a consultant at Indian maternal health non-profit ARMMAN. “And summer months in India are becoming worse.”

Heatwaves threaten unborn children
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“Temperature rises with global warming could have major implications for child health,” the review, led by the Wits Reproductive Health and HIV Institute (WRHI) in South Africa, concludes. It adds that “the public also appears largely unaware of the risks of heat exposure during pregnancy.”

Most of the studies were done in high-income countries. But the review says pregnant women in low- and middle-income countries could be at particular risk — in part because poorer women are less able to shield from high temperatures and may have to keep working “beyond their heat tolerance limits,” even in late pregnancy.

“The effects of temperature are going to be really different in different populations in different settings,” said Dr. Darshnika Pemi Lakhoo, a researcher at WRHI. “Even in the same city, there’s going to be different ways that people experience temperature.”

In India, women with low socio-economic status “have absolutely no access to air-conditioners or coolers — or sometimes even fans in the house, because the electricity is irregular,” says Thariani.

A recent report found that 323 million people lack access to cooling across India. Baswal, who was given the all-clear after an ultrasound and advised to stay hydrated, is among the lucky
few to have air-conditioning at home. But in recent weeks, surging power demand during the heatwave has led to power cuts for two to three hours each day. Each time, the temperature creeps up and “at that time I start to feel dizzy, I start vomiting,” she says.

Infants at risk as temperatures soar
Heatwaves aren’t just dangerous to unborn babies — higher temperatures can put newborns at risk, too. A study of neonatal intensive care unit admissions in a hospital with no air-conditioning during a 2010 heatwave in Ahmedabad found that each degree the temperature climbed above 42 C was associated with a 43% increase in admissions.

Dr. Ana says the heat has left many of the women at Safdarjung Hospital unable to breastfeed: “If the woman is not hydrated, how can she feed the baby? She won’t lactate properly.”

India already struggles with high levels of child malnutrition, responsible for an estimated two-thirds of deaths among children under five. The impacts of rising temperatures on health have long been a concern for researchers, who warn that heatwaves will exacerbate food and water shortages and facilitate the spread of infectious diseases.

Vulnerable groups, including pregnant women and children, will be most at risk. Dengue, for example, which has the highest fatality rates among children, has spread to new regions in recent years because of climate change.

Research, advocacy and policy change
Lakhoo believes there is a need for more research into the direct impact of heat exposure on maternal and neonatal health.

“That’s something that’s not been explored nearly as well as the indirect impacts,” she says. Low- and middle-income countries are particularly “underrepresented in research.”

Thariani agrees. This is “the first time somebody’s asking my opinion on a topic like this,” she says of the DW interview.

ARMMAN trains healthcare workers to monitor patients for symptoms of heatstroke and counsel them on the importance of staying hydrated. But Thariani says the government must do more to spread the message about the dangers of heat exposure during pregnancy.

Quantifying direct outcomes can help to push for better policy measures, as well as strengthen existing healthcare systems, Lakhoo says.

“Climate change is going to be the biggest threat to health in our century,” she says. “So, it is really important that we are able to do research in this field that can translate into practice to improve people’s outcomes.”

Data gathered by WRHI will be used to pilot a district health surveillance system in South Africa, which will act as an early warning system for healthcare providers during high temperatures. “If we know, for example, that there are going to be four or five extra preterm births when the temperature is at a certain level, then we can use that to assist in preparing healthcare systems for that extra burden,” Lakhoo explains.
Aspirin

Why has aspirin advice for heart protection changed?
The recent change in guidelines, to dis-favour the routine use of aspirin, takes into account the reduction in anticipated benefits due to the increased protection being offered by other drugs and non-drug measures. (The Indian Express: 20220606)


The American Heart Association and the American College of Cardiology have altered their recommendation on prescribing aspirin for primary prevention of CVD and CHD. (File Photo) For many decades, aspirin was advised to prevent heart attacks, both for those who had pre-existing cardiovascular disease (CVD) and for preventing coronary heart disease (CHD). Baby aspirin (low dose aspirin — usually a 75-81 mg tablet) became an article of faith for heart protection in American adults. So, for many Americans, it came as a surprise that recent guidelines issued by the American Heart Association and the American College of Cardiology altered their recommendation on prescribing aspirin for primary prevention of CVD and CHD. Though UK and Europe had earlier changed their positions on the use of aspirin for heart attack prevention, American guidelines influence medical practice in many other parts of the world. So, the reasons for a change of stance in those guidelines need to be understood even in India.

Covid-19 vaccine misinformation

Covid-19 vaccine misinformation still fuels fears surrounding pregnancy, a new study finds
The misinformation is so pervasive that it has even sown doubts in segments of the population that generally believe in the coronavirus vaccines’ safety for adults, including Democratic voters and people who have been fully vaccinated. (The Indian Express: 20220606)


Experts say that widespread doubts about the safety of coronavirus vaccines for pregnant women are baseless. (Credit: Kenny Holston for The New York Times)
Written by Adeel Hassan
A steady bombardment of coronavirus misinformation during the pandemic has left nearly one-third of American women who are pregnant or who plan to become pregnant believing at least one falsehood about coronavirus vaccinations and pregnancy, according to a new study. A higher share were unsure whether to believe the myths.

The research, conducted in May by the Kaiser Family Foundation, considered three widespread false statements about the vaccines and concluded that about 6 in 10 US adults, as well as 7 in 10 women who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant, either believed or were unsure about at least one of the false statements.

Also Read | Six ways to prepare for pregnancy after miscarriage

The study’s findings were published last week and based on polling of more than 1,500 American adults, including 900 women, in English and Spanish. More than 600 women ages 18-49 participated. Its conclusions were in line with other experts’ expectations.

“Pregnancy is a time where a lot of women are seeking information on a variety of pregnancy-related topics, but many pregnancy forums are filled with misinformation,” said Tara Kirk Sell, a senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, who was not involved in the study. She said she had done similar online searches before her first pregnancy.

One reason misinformation about the vaccines and pregnancy may have gained so much traction, experts say, is that the earliest clinical trials of the coronavirus vaccines excluded pregnant women. (Source: Pixabay)

The misinformation is so pervasive that it has even sown doubts in segments of the population that generally believe in the coronavirus vaccines’ safety for adults, including Democratic voters and people who have been fully vaccinated. Fewer than half of these survey respondents in those groups told Kaiser’s pollsters that they were “very confident” that immunisation was safe for pregnant women, despite long-running campaigns by health officials across the country to reassure the population that they are.

The three false statements used in the Kaiser survey were:

— “Pregnant women should not get the Covid-19 vaccine.”

— “It is unsafe for women who are breastfeeding to get a Covid-19 vaccine.”

— “The Covid-19 vaccines have been shown to cause infertility.”

“There are certain things that increase perception of risks,” Sell said. “One of these is risks to future generations. So rumours related to pregnancy are particularly gripping.

Also Read | How air pollution causes cancer

“I’ve personally seen friends and family members just say that in a situation where they are already struggling or high-risk, they don’t want to do anything that might tip the scale in a negative way.”

Health experts, including the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, recommend that pregnant women get vaccinated against the coronavirus as soon as possible, to protect both maternal and foetal health. Scientists have found that it is safe for breastfeeding women to get immunised. And there is no evidence that vaccine doses cause infertility.
Other studies show that pregnant women who develop Covid-19 face a higher risk of needing intensive care or mechanical ventilation. And despite the relative youth of pregnant women, they face a higher risk of dying. About 30% of pregnant women in the United States remain unvaccinated, according to estimates from the CDC. "We know pregnant individuals are at an increased risk when it comes to Covid-19, but they absolutely should not and do not have to die from it,” said Dr. Christopher Zahn, chief of clinical practice and health equity and quality at the American College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. Kaiser researchers found that among women who were pregnant or planning to become pregnant: 60% believed that pregnant women should not get the vaccine, or were unsure if this was true; and about the same number believed, or were unsure, whether the vaccines had been shown to cause infertility. Although only 16% said they believed the false infertility claim outright, another 44% said they were unsure if it were true. Torrents of misinformation during the pandemic have repeatedly disrupted public health campaigns. Previous spikes in falsehoods spread doubts about vaccines, masks and the severity of the virus, and undermined best practices for controlling the spread of the coronavirus, health experts said, noting that misinformation was a key factor in vaccine hesitancy. US Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy has demanded information from tech companies about the major sources of Covid-19 misinformation. One reason misinformation about the vaccines and pregnancy may have gained so much traction, experts say, is that the earliest clinical trials of the coronavirus vaccines excluded pregnant women. The lack of trial data led the CDC and World Health Organisation to initially give different recommendations to pregnant women, although neither explicitly forbade, nor encouraged, immunising pregnant women. Other health organisations chose to wait for more safety data from later trials before making an official recommendation for pregnant women to get vaccinated. "Unfortunately, in the interim, the information gap was filled with a lot of misinformation, particularly on social media, and that has been an uphill battle to combat,” Zahn said. “While we have made a lot of progress with uptake among pregnant individuals in the last year, there was also a lot of time lost.” Researchers have pointed for years to the proliferation of anti-vaccine misinformation on social networks as a factor in vaccine hesitancy and in the lower rates of Covid-19 vaccine adoption in more conservative states. “At the root of this problem is trust, or really, it’s a lack of trust,” Sell said. “Trusted doctors need to help support women in understanding the importance of vaccination against Covid as well as its safety. But when people don’t have trust in authorities, no provider to go to, or generally don’t feel like they have a place to get good information, this misinformation can fill that void.”
Pregnancy after miscarriage

Six ways to prepare for pregnancy after miscarriage

If you have any concerns about your miscarriage or further pregnancies, discuss them with your doctor beforehand (The Indian Express: 20220606)

https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/health/pregnancy-after-miscarriage-tips-7935843/

PregnancyOne reason misinformation about the vaccines and pregnancy may have gained so much traction, experts say, is that the earliest clinical trials of the coronavirus vaccines excluded pregnant women. (Source: Pixabay)

Miscarriage is a devastating experience that can also lead to anxiety. Women who have miscarried are usually worried about their subsequent pregnancies. ‘Can I conceive again?’ and ‘do I need treatment for infertility?’ are some of the common questions that follow miscarriage, said Dr Gurpreet Singh Kalra, Medical Director – India, MD MSc FFMLM, Medical Director India, ART Fertility Clinics, Hon. Academic Lecturer University of Bristol (UK), and Fellow Faculty of Medical Leadership and Management (UK).

While it is not regularly discussed, “miscarriage is more common than you think”, Dr Kalra said adding that it is also highly likely that after an early loss of pregnancy, a woman will go on to have a healthy child. “Though getting pregnant after a miscarriage is no different from how you usually conceive, the below tips will help you improve your chances of a healthy pregnancy,” the expert said.

Usually, an early pregnancy loss is caused by conditions like chromosomal abnormalities that don’t depend entirely on a woman’s reproductive health. Only about 1% of women have recurrent or more than two back-to-back miscarriages.

“Moreover, nearly 20% of all pregnancies result in a miscarriage, and this includes women who have already experienced a loss too. However, after two losses, the chances of miscarriage increase to 28%. This still leaves a high probability of 72% for women to carry a healthy pregnancy. Understanding these odds can reduce your anxiety and ease your mind while trying to conceive again,” Dr Kalra explained.

Take some time

ALSO READ | If you don’t avoid certain food items during pregnancy, listeria can up miscarriage risk

Miscarriages can be exhausting, both physically and mentally. After the loss, you require plenty of rest and self-care. While your body returns to normal in a few months after the loss, you should still take some time before trying to conceive.

Physically

Doctors recommend waiting up to three months or at least one complete menstrual cycle before trying to conceive again. You might start ovulating as early as two weeks after a miscarriage, but your body takes 2-3 months to have regular periods. “Moreover, the hCG hormone can also
take one or two months to drop back to normal levels. If you try conceiving before that, you may get a false positive on pregnancy tests. Or worse, the steady drop in hCG can be misdiagnosed as another pregnancy loss,” Dr Kalra said.

Some miscarriages need medical or surgical assistance such as dilation and curettage (D&C). If you have undergone a miscarriage treatment, your body takes more time to recover, and you are advised to wait longer before you attempt conceiving again.

Emotionally

“No matter when it happens, miscarriages drain a couple emotionally. Intense feelings of grief, anger and even guilt are common. But there is no “normal” way to react to a loss of an unborn baby. Some miscarriages happen in a matter of a few hours, while others might take days or even weeks. Naturally, these are highly taxing phases, and people may take many months to recover from them,” said Dr Kalra.

Even though you want a child, don’t rush into conceiving before you are mentally ready. There is no set time to emotionally recover from miscarriage, as it is a delicate situation. Being free of stress and negative emotions will have a better impact on your future pregnancy.

Detect underlying causes

If you have more than one miscarriage, getting a complete preconception check-up helps detect any underlying causes for the loss. Uncontrolled diabetes, thyroid problems, PCOS, autoimmune conditions, genetic abnormalities and other health conditions increase the chances of miscarriage. By detecting them early, you can have a better chance of conceiving and giving birth to a healthy child. If some health conditions prevent you from getting pregnant naturally, you can also opt for In Vitro Fertilization.

Adopt a healthy lifestyle

Lifestyle changes are important to have a healthy pregnancy. A balanced diet that includes leafy vegetables, pulses, fruits, and iron-rich foods supplies the body with necessary nutrients. Along with it, drink at least eight glasses of water every day.

Smoking, consumption of alcohol, or recreational drugs can impact your conception negatively. Avoid these habits and limit your caffeine intake to less than 200mg per day. Include mild to moderate exercise in your routine. This includes walking, yoga, or jogging. It is best to avoid anything physically too vigorous or strenuous. Extreme exercise can inhibit your ability to release eggs.

Try to keep stress in check by including activities like meditation and journaling. You are also recommended to take folic acid supplements as this prevents certain types of congenital abnormalities in the baby.

Keep your health in check
It is important to keep up with your doctor’s appointments when you are trying to conceive, especially after a miscarriage. Your OB-GYN specialist will guide you to the right steps after your pregnancy loss. They can also advise you if you are looking for any additional treatment for infertility.

If you have any concerns about your miscarriage or further pregnancies, discuss them with your doctor beforehand. Depending on your medical history, they may prescribe some medications that can improve your chances of conception. If you had multiple miscarriages, they might also suggest some tests to understand the causes.

Using ovulation predictors

Timing your intercourse close to ovulation gives you a better chance to get pregnant. Using ovulation predictor kits or OPKs, you can predict when you ovulate. These kits work by detecting a rise in the luteinizing hormone in the body, which is an indicator of ovulation. The best time to try for pregnancy is after the rise in the hormone.

“However, it is best to use the kit only after you start regularly menstruating post-miscarriage. Even though you ovulate before that, the varying hormone levels in your body cause complications during conception and pregnancy. Equally, getting into a habit of having regular sexual intercourse about 2-3 times a week, gives you equally good exposure to the chance of getting pregnant, while keeping it natural and stress-free,” Dr Kalra suggested.

Air pollution

How air pollution causes cancer
Particulate matter build-up in the lungs changes how cells replicate, causing DNA damage. This, studies have shown, triggers cancerous growth, says Dr M S Kanwar, Senior Consultant, Department of Pulmonology, Critical Care and Sleep Medicine, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, Delhi(The Indian Express: 20220606)

https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/health/air-pollution-causes-cancer-7952696/

Health effects may include cardiovascular effects such as cardiac arrhythmias and heart attacks and respiratory effects such as asthma attacks and bronchitis. (File)
Outdoor air pollution causes roughly one in 10 cases of lung cancer. Though our respiratory system is fairly resilient and ups its defence mechanisms, a prolonged exposure to elevated particle pollution impacts lung functionality in even apparently healthy people.
And since we cannot avoid particle pollution exposure, taking simple steps to reduce exposure or neutralise it will reduce the severity of lung and systemic adverse health effects in both healthy and more sensitive people.

Studies have shown a significant association between exposure to particle pollution and health risks, including premature death. Health effects may include cardiovascular effects such as cardiac arrhythmias and heart attacks and respiratory effects such as asthma attacks and bronchitis.

“The size of particles is directly linked to their potential for causing health problems. Fine particles (PM2.5) pose the greatest health risk as they can get deep into the lungs and even into the bloodstream. There are a few different ways that particles in air pollution could damage DNA in cells and cause lung cancer. For example, tiny particles may build up in the lungs and change how cells replicate. This could lead to DNA damage, mutations and altered gene expression. Such changes then trigger the lung cells to grow uncontrollably,” says Dr M S Kanwar, Senior Consultant, Department of Pulmonology, Critical Care and Sleep Medicine, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, Delhi.

It must be recalled that the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) had conducted an evaluation on the carcinogenicity of outdoor air pollution, including particle pollution, and concluded that both are Group I agents (carcinogenic to humans). It had factored in all routes of exposure and included an evaluation of individual components of particle pollution. Several studies since then have established the link between particulate matter and increased incidence of lung cancer.

“But if you are living in a city like Delhi, you can mitigate risks by changing your lifestyle and behaviour. And while one cannot avoid the outdoors, one can purify the air indoors. If you are sensitive to pollution and have heart, lung issues, then internalise mask-wearing as a routine,” says Dr Kanwar.

Most experts suggest measures like staying away from wood and coal fire, reducing smoking and minimising your exposure by checking real time air quality before stepping out. Make sure the indoor air is filtered through cross-ventilation or purifiers and test your home for radon levels. Invest in HEPA filters for home devices.

📣 The above article is for information purposes only and is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Always seek the guidance of your doctor or other qualified health professional for any questions you may have regarding your health or a medical condition.
Fasting

Find out if intermittent fasting is good for you
It has been suggested that intermittent fasting may help in cell repair (which may combat ageing) and produce favourable effects on metabolic parameters like cholesterol and blood sugar. (The Indian Express: 20220606)

https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/health/find-intermittent-fasting-good-7952610/

Intermittent fasting may work in cases but no data suggest that it is a miraculous path to good health and longevity. (File)

The quest for perfect health and a long life has always driven humankind to try different kinds of food and diets. Despite all the advances in science, the search for an ideal diet remains elusive. For centuries, the fight was to get enough food to survive till cereal cultivation allowed humans to survive without having to always hunt for their food. However, the progressive, widespread availability of energy-dense, carbohydrate-rich food based on refined cereals has resulted in an epidemic of obesity and non-communicable diseases like diabetes and heart diseases.

The search for a diet to help us lose weight and reduce our risk of non-communicable diseases has led to the popularity of many dietary fads and fashions. Atkins diet, Paleo diet, South beach diet, GM diets are examples that have come and gone. Similarly, a diet pattern that has gained immense popularity in the last few years is intermittent fasting.

Intermittent fasting may work in cases but no data suggest that it is a miraculous path to good health and longevity. Besides, it is not for everybody, says Dr Ambrish Mithal, Chairman and Head, Endocrinology and Diabetes, Max Healthcare.

Read in Premium |The 5:2 diet: A popular way of intermittent fasting to lose weight
What is intermittent fasting?

Fasting has been practised from time immemorial as a means to cleanse one’s body and has been recommended by most religions, albeit in different forms. Intermittent fasting essentially means periods of fasting followed by periods in which eating is permitted. There are several methods of practising IF. Alternate day fasting entails restricting your food intake to 500 calories every alternate day while following your usual calorie routine on other days. One could also fast twice a week (5:2 method), or five days every month. The most popular variant of IF, in India, is however, the 16:8 method. In a 24-hour cycle, this requires fasting for 16 hours and allows free food consumption in the remaining eight hours.

How is intermittent fasting thought to work?

The basic difference between intermittent fasting and simple calorie restriction is that our bodies tend to adapt to low calorie intakes over a period of time. As a result, we stop losing weight after three to six months despite persisting with a low-calorie intake. It is thought that allowing “normal” food intake intermittently is able to keep the body responsive to changes in diet.
Don't Miss | Time restricted eating no better than calorie counting in weight loss, a study finds
What happens to our metabolism when we fast?

Whenever we eat food, there is a rise in blood glucose levels and some fats in our bodies. This leads to a surge of insulin which facilitates the uptake of these substances and utilisation by the cells. When glucose supply exceeds energy intake, it is stored as glycogen and ultimately as fat in our body. When we fast, there is a lack of glucose, so energy supply to tissues like muscle, heart, liver and kidneys is maintained first by glycogen and then by breaking down stored fats into ketones (metabolic switch).

Ultimately, when we fast for prolonged periods, our body fat stores start melting. It has also been suggested that intermittent fasting may help in cell repair (which may combat ageing) and produce favourable effects on metabolic parameters like cholesterol and blood sugar. Animal studies suggest major benefits of fasting, including longevity.

Does this mean that intermittent fasting is the ultimate solution to obesity, diabetes and heart disease conditions?

Human studies have shown that intermittent fasting typically produces weight loss of three to five kilos over two to three months, although there is wide variability in the results. Unfortunately, for the proponents of intermittent fasting, most studies have not shown a significant benefit of intermittent fasting over other approaches in terms of weight loss, lipid parameters, blood glucose levels and others. The impact of intermittent fasting in these short to medium-term studies could largely be attributed to a reduction in calorie intake. For comparable calorie intakes, conventional calorie restriction was as effective as intermittent fasting in improving metabolic parameters.

Must Read | Why you may not be losing weight despite intermittent fasting
Where does that leave us with regard to the current status of intermittent fasting?

Intermittent fasting is an effective weight loss strategy but the data till now suggests that it may not be more effective than calorie restriction by other means. It is possible that intermittent fasting has long-term benefits in humans but the evidence to prove that is not available at present.

I believe that the present use of intermittent fasting is determined by individual choice. Some may find it easy to control their calories by fasting. Others may find it impossible to fast for 16 hours, particularly if they have some chronic health conditions.

Avoiding unhealthy food during the eating period is important, else it can attenuate the benefits of intermittent fasting. The best time to eat is from 8 am to 4 pm, or thereabouts. Therefore, giving up dinner is the best strategy. Giving up breakfast, as many do, is not the best option.

Also Read in Premium | Guide to eat right: Is intermittent fasting safe for people living with diabetes?
Who should not opt for intermittent fasting?

Pregnant and lactating women, and children should not consider intermittent fasting. Those with diabetes or on medicines that do not produce a low blood sugar reaction (metformin,
gliptins, gliflozins) can consider fasting if they want to. Those who get “acidity” when they miss meals are also not the best candidates for intermittent fasting. If you are considering opting for intermittent fasting, connect with your doctor first.

Is intermittent fasting the miraculous path to good health and longevity that we were all waiting for?

**Mental healthcare**

**Building a supportive environment for mental healthcare in India**

The alleviation of mental health challenges cannot be left entirely to the hands of mental health professionals (The Indian Express: 20220606)


Written by Shubhrata Prakash, Dr Sukriti Chauhan | New Delhi |
June 4, 2022 9:10:35 am

mental health, mental heath matters, mental health crisis in indiaPoor mental health incapacitates communities (Photo: Getty Images/thinkstock)

“What will they say?”

The worry of ‘what others might say’ has been an ever-present barrier in the paths of people wanting to do anything freely.

Despite the passage of time leading us now well into the third decade of the 21st century, this pervasive mindset remains and creeps into the simplest of actions, preventing people from accessing opportunities, care and living as they want.

Multiple people in the country face mental health challenges; yet they find it difficult to seek care.

There are several barriers to accessing mental health care, and apart from several structural impediments, social stigma around mental illness and the lack of awareness about mental health contribute significantly to the mental health care gap.

Societal stigma is often the result of labelling and the incorrect use of terminology in everyday conversations.

It also facilitates the inhibition, on the part of individuals suffering from mental disorders and their families, of acknowledging or accepting the condition and seeking the required mental health care.

Thus, treatable mental health conditions go untreated resulting in poor mental health, loss in the quality of life, and even leading to suicidal ideation and actual suicides.
Research finds a direct correlation between the experiences of discrimination and suicidality, suicide attempts from those facing mental health challenges.

The exact extent of stigma and consequential effects might never be quantified, but even with limited evidence, addressing it becomes the need of the hour.

ALSO READ | Cycling, walking in nature may improve your mental health

Lack of awareness creates a fallacious understanding of mental illness – assumptions that only a visibly unwell person is the one that is ‘mentally ill’ and makes it difficult for others to accept their condition.

The defined image of a person with mental illness – bed-ridden, irresponsible, ‘crazy’, unsuccessful, prone to violence is often fueled by incorrect media portrayals. This takes away from the thousands who are thriving in other areas of life but continue to struggle with mental health problems.

Stories of Anthony Bourdain, Robin Williams, and Chester Bennington among many others stand testament to how successful people seemingly happy can struggle with mental health and even die by suicide.

Experts attribute this to the constant pressure and burden of expectations that they face. (Source: Getty Images/Thinkstock)

ALSO READ | World Health Day 2022: How ultra-processed foods affect health and environment; sustainable ways to remain healthy

The alleviation of mental health challenges cannot be left entirely to the hands of mental health professionals; the severity and impact on daily life demands holistic care involving families, friends, workplaces and communities.

A non-judgmental attitude towards mental illness and a meaningful approach to mental health is possible only with creating behavioral change at the individual and societal level to address the treatment gap, as stigma mitigation stands at the very center of the mental health landscape.

Acceptance is the first and the most necessary step towards recovery, but the process becomes easier with the support of those around us.

Everyone must understand that people are more than their diagnosis and looking at people through the narrow lens of the dysfunction, brought about by their mental health condition, oversimplifies the complexity of human behaviour.

Encouraging those displaying symptoms to get screened is essential and would help develop help-seeking behaviour.

ALSO READ | Mental health 2021: The psychological consequences of the pandemic

Mental disorders (like depression, anxiety) and suicides particularly affect young people, yet they may not always seek treatment or believe help is useful.

Channeling the energy of the youth in stigma reduction and awareness creation is imperative and educational institutions can become centers for the same, using local language and common experiences to teach students about potential causes of mental disorders, services available and how to interact with someone possibly having any mental illness.
Incorporating the information within the current educational curriculum may work to enhance mental health literacy.

Other strategies must include building mental health literacy and awareness about available services in the communities, incorporating an intersectional lens to understand challenges associated with social identities, discussing the harmful impact of unsolicited advice, identifying underlying behaviours and referring people to seeking care from formal institutions.

Only when we start accepting, beyond the shades of gender, class, and stigma, will we be able to build a nation ready to respond to mental health challenges adequately.

*The views of the author expressed here are personal and do not represent those of the organisation represented.

**Covid vaccines**

**Covid vaccines are safe for cancer patients: They reduce mortality and prevent gaps in treatment**

A recent Lancet study found that the effectiveness of the Covid vaccine is lower and drops faster in cancer patients compared to healthy individuals. But Dr Abhishek Shankar finds this study to be slightly flawed because it does not look at antibody levels and just tracks breakthrough infections in patients. (The Indian Express: 20220606)


We usually see lower antibody titres in cancer patients, especially those who are undergoing chemotherapy or radiotherapy as these treatments suppress their immune system, says Dr Abhishek Shankar.

Why Dr Shankar: Dr Abhishek Shankar is an associate professor of radiation oncology at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Patna. He has been working on preventive oncology for years and trains primary healthcare physicians in detecting early stages of cancer. An editor for several cancer journals, he has previously worked at AIIMS, Delhi and Lady Hardinge Medical College.

Vaccine effectiveness is lower and drops faster in cancer patients compared to healthy individuals. A study by the Lancet Oncology journal found that a Covid-19 vaccine was 69.8 per cent effective in preventing a breakthrough infection in healthy individuals as compared to 65.5 per cent in cancer patients. The vaccine’s effectiveness, measured three to six months after the second dose, dropped sharply for cancer patients and stood at 47 per cent compared to 61.4
per cent in healthy individuals. The effectiveness was found to be the lowest in those undergoing systemic anti-cancer treatments such as radiotherapy. The effectiveness was also found to be lower in those who had leukaemia (blood cancer) or lymphoma (cancer of lymph system cells) compared to those with solid organ cancers. The study included data from 3.7 lakh cancer patients and 2.8 crore healthy individuals.

A recent Lancet study shows Covid vaccines are less effective in cancer patients. What does this mean?

I think the conclusions of the study are a little flawed; let me tell you why. How do we measure vaccine effectiveness? We see how many people in a particular group develop a breakthrough infection after complete vaccination. Now, tell me who is more likely to get the infection – a healthy person who stays at home when there is a surge in the number of Covid-19 cases or a person who continues to visit a hospital regularly for treatment despite the numbers? Those going to hospitals are more likely to be exposed to the virus and hence more likely to develop the infection.

Also Read |Cancer patients should get vaccinated without further delay: Doctors

This is also the reason why the study found the effectiveness of the vaccine to be the lowest among those undergoing treatments such as chemotherapy. Patients under chemotherapy have to visit their hospital regularly and are exposed to the virus. Similarly, leukaemia patients have to be admitted to the hospital for about 14 days initially, but those with solid cancers do not.

They have also looked at vaccine effectiveness in patients in different stages of cancer. Now a patient with stage 4 cancer has to keep going to the hospital for tests and chemotherapy fairly regularly. These patients are exposed to that environment again and again and that is a major predictor of an infection. They have a great dataset – and, it is almost impossible to get such granular, electronic patient data in India even from premier institutes like AIIMS – but I would have liked to know which vaccine works better in which sub-group of cancer patients.

But isn’t the immune response poorer in cancer patients compared to healthy individuals?

Yes. We usually see lower antibody titres in cancer patients, especially those who are undergoing chemotherapy or radiotherapy as these treatments suppress their immune system. In such a condition, when the cells that fight off an infection are not working properly, the antibody levels developed by these cells against the vaccine, or even a natural infection, are lower. Anyway, this study does not look at the antibody levels at all. The study looks just at breakthrough infections in patients.

Explained |94% cancer patients respond well to Covid-19 vaccines, study flags questions over rest

Then what is the role of Covid-19 vaccines in cancer patients?

The vaccines are certainly protective; they reduce mortality and are safe. And they ensure that when there is the next wave, patients do not have to discontinue their treatment. Treatment gaps really affect the outcomes of cancer patients.

We have seen that whenever there is an increase in the number of cases, people are very hesitant to come to hospitals, even with the Omicron wave. In fact, we were missing the diagnosis of
nearly 1 lakh per month. All of this does affect the outcome and this is where the vaccine becomes important.

Newborn

New parents, here are answers to some FAQs concerning your newborn
It is okay if the baby wakes up multiple times during the night; they may require feeds! (The Indian Express: 20220606)

https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/health/new-parents-answers-questions-newborn-7943240/

new parents, first time parents, common questions by new parents, infant health, babies health, FAQ parents, newborn, breastfeeding, diaper rash, newborn diet, indian express newsParents can touch, cuddle, rock, and hold the child with love. Respond immediately when they cry. (Photo: Getty/Thinkstock)

When you become a parent for the first time, you usually have a lot of questions about the health and well-being of your baby — it is only natural. Most people do not know where to begin, or may sometimes feel that their questions are irrelevant.

This is a common question. Ideally, mothers will have to breastfeed their babies exclusively for 6 months. After that, start with complimentary food, and breastfeeding can continue till 2 years. Do not stop breastfeeding abruptly.

Is there a specific time when the umbilical cord falls?

After birth, the umbilical cord may turn brown, black, or grey, and it might feel somewhat damp. Try to keep that area clean and dry so that the normal healing process can take place. The umbilical cord will fall off within two weeks of birth. You can speak with an expert who can guide you.

It is okay if the baby wakes up multiple times during the night; they may require feeds. As they gain weight, they will naturally go longer between feedings. The babies will wake up at least during the first 3 months. To encourage more sleep at night, bathe them, rock them, read, play quiet music, and feed them shortly before bed.

Is the baby eating enough?

You need to continue feeding the baby when they want and avoid when they express their stomach is full. Do not go overboard thinking the baby is not getting enough nutrition. Babies know when they need food and when they don’t. Signs they aren’t getting enough to eat are less urine and more lethargy. Routine weight-checking will give you a good idea.
ALSO READ | US faces a shortage of baby formula; find out what it is and why, when it is given
Should I bathe my baby every day?

No need to bathe till the umbilical cord falls off. It is okay to bathe your baby two or three times in any given week. Use a soap or a moisturiser after consulting with your doctor. Make sure the products are not loaded with chemicals or fragrances.

ALSO READ | What should new parents keep in mind while choosing baby wipes?
How to avoid a diaper rash?

Diaper rash is a common problem. Changing diapers from time to time will help. Try to wipe the baby’s bottom with warm water during diaper change. It can be helpful to expose the bottom to fresh air. If a rash appears, opt for a good moisturiser or ointment to manage redness and irritation.

How to strengthen the bond with the baby?

Parents can touch, cuddle, rock, and hold the child with love and care. Respond immediately when they cry, so that they feel safe and secure. Parents should try kangaroo care to enhance the bond.

Aging brain’

Expert shares the best foods ‘for an Aging brain’
"Start including these foods in your diet to work towards a healthier brain and fight off many of the ways our brain can get hurt over time, including free radicals, decreased blood flow, and more," nutritional psychiatrist Dr Uma Naidoo shared on Instagram (The Indian Express: 20220606)

The only difference in the two groups, across all of the experiments, was that action-oriented people were more confident in their choices. (Source: Pixabay)
Much like the body, over time, the brain can also start ageing if proper attention towards boosting its health is not paid. As such, experts suggest consuming certain foods that help protect the brain from illnesses, improve memory and concentration, and also keep it healthy and young.

Nutritional psychiatrist Dr Uma Naidoo had earlier shared a few food items that are best for an ageing brain. “Looking for the fountain of youth for your brain? Start including these foods in your diet to work towards a healthier brain and fight off many of the ways our brain can get hurt over time, including free radicals, decreased blood flow, and more,” she wrote.
According to Dr Naidoo, “Extra virgin olive oil is linked to a lower incidence of Alzheimer’s because it increases autophagy of brain cells.” Try mixed with dijon mustard and apple cider vinegar for a “brain-healthy” salad dressing.

Spices

Indians just can’t do without their spices. But, did you know that they can help boost brain health, too? “Turmeric with a pinch of black pepper, cinnamon, saffron, rosemary and ginger — all help to promote healthy brain ageing and memory.”

ALSO READ | These four food items can help control high blood pressure; find out Omega-3

“EPA and DHA are omega 3 fatty acids found in fatty fish like wild-caught salmon that help to protect the brain from ageing. ALA, the omega 3 found in plant sources, like nuts and seeds, can be converted to EPA and DHA in small amounts,” she said.

Leafy greens

Leafy greens are rich in folate which is one of the most important vitamins for maintaining a healthy brain. “Foods like spinach, swiss chard, arugula and dandelion greens help to maintain cognitive integrity with age,” Dr Naidoo explained.

Rainbow of veggies

Different coloured plant foods contain different brain-healthy nutrients and fibre. “Plant-based diets are consistently associated with cognitive longevity,” she said.

**Heart attack’**

**It’s not the same as heart attack’: Cardiologist busts common myths about heart failure**

"Although heart failure is more common amongst individuals aged 55 years and older, the disease is increasingly affecting the younger population as well," Dr Jamshed Dalal said (The Indian Express: 20220606)

Despite being a serious condition, heart failure can be managed with the right treatment and regular cardiologist consultations (Source: Getty Images/Thinkstock)

Heart diseases, along with chronic conditions like heart failure, have become increasingly common, even among youngsters. Amid the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a surge in cases of heart ailments. As such, it becomes crucial to be aware of several misconceptions about heart failure to be able to manage the condition well, according to Dr Jamshed Dalal, Director, Cardiac Sciences, Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital, Mumbai.

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“For one, it is not the same as a heart attack. Heart failure refers to the heart’s inability to pump enough blood efficiently to meet the body’s needs. Another type of heart failure is when the heart muscle becomes stiff and is unable to relax leading to similar symptoms and clinical features. By contrast, a heart attack occurs when there is a blockage of blood supply to the heart,” he explained.

Fact: “Although heart failure is more common amongst individuals aged 55 years and older, the disease is increasingly affecting the younger population as well,” Dr Dalal told indianexpress.com.

Patients often think heart failure is the ‘end of life’ and cannot be managed. This is not true. (Source: Getty Images/Thinkstock)

Myth: Heart failure is extremely sudden and has no warning signs.

Fact: There are, in fact, a number of signs and symptoms associated with heart failure and some of these include breathlessness occurring during various different activities, such as when one is exercising, and in later stages, even when lying in bed, swelling (most commonly seen in the ankles and bloating in the abdomen), fatigue and loss of appetite. “Acute heart failure can present suddenly, usually precipitated by certain factors,” he added.

ALSO READ | Youngsters should also worry about heart health; here’s why

Myth: Heart failure cannot be managed.

Fact: The expert said, “Patients often think heart failure is the ‘end of life’ and cannot be managed. This is not true as there are effective treatment options (typically a combination including lifestyle interventions, medications and mechanical devices). In the last stages, heart transplantation remains an option as well. Recently, many new medicines have been introduced which improve heart failure and prolong survival.”

Despite being a serious condition, heart failure can be managed with the right treatment and regular cardiologist consultations, Dr Dalal said. “With regular compliance to treatment and healthy lifestyle modifications, patients can lead healthier, happier and longer lives.”

Heart attack’

It’s not the same as heart attack’: Cardiologist busts common myths about heart failure

"Although heart failure is more common amongst individuals aged 55 years and older, the disease is increasingly affecting the younger population as well," Dr Jamshed Dalal said
(The Indian Express: 20220606)

Despite being a serious condition, heart failure can be managed with the right treatment and regular cardiologist consultations (Source: Getty Images/Thinkstock)

Heart diseases, along with chronic conditions like heart failure, have become increasingly common, even among youngsters. Amid the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a surge in cases of heart ailments. As such, it becomes crucial to be aware of several misconceptions about heart failure to be able to manage the condition well, according to Dr Jamshed Dalal, Director, Cardiac Sciences, Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital, Mumbai.

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“For one, it is not the same as a heart attack. Heart failure refers to the heart’s inability to pump enough blood efficiently to meet the body’s needs. Another type of heart failure is when the heart muscle becomes stiff and is unable to relax leading to similar symptoms and clinical features. By contrast, a heart attack occurs when there is a blockage of blood supply to the heart,” he explained.

Fact: “Although heart failure is more common amongst individuals aged 55 years and older, the disease is increasingly affecting the younger population as well,” Dr Dalal told indianexpress.com.

Patients often think heart failure is the ‘end of life’ and cannot be managed. This is not true. (Source: Getty Images/Thinkstock)

Myth: Heart failure is extremely sudden and has no warning signs.

Fact: There are, in fact, a number of signs and symptoms associated with heart failure and some of these include breathlessness occurring during various different activities, such as when one is exercising, and in later stages, even when lying in bed, swelling (most commonly seen in the ankles and bloating in the abdomen), fatigue and loss of appetite. “Acute heart failure can present suddenly, usually precipitated by certain factors,” he added.

ALSO READ | Youngsters should also worry about heart health; here’s why

Myth: Heart failure cannot be managed.

Fact: The expert said, “Patients often think heart failure is the ‘end of life’ and cannot be managed. This is not true as there are effective treatment options (typically a combination including lifestyle interventions, medications and mechanical devices). In the last stages, heart transplantation remains an option as well. Recently, many new medicines have been introduced which improve heart failure and prolong survival.”

Despite being a serious condition, heart failure can be managed with the right treatment and regular cardiologist consultations, Dr Dalal said. “With regular compliance to treatment and healthy lifestyle modifications, patients can lead healthier, happier and longer lives.”
Chronic migraine needs early diagnosis, timely attention and lifestyle management, neurologists say
Dr Rishi Jain, Medical Director, AbbVie, said that chronic migraine is an under-recognized and an under-treated condition. (The Indian Express: 20220606)


Chronic migraine needs early diagnosis, timely attention and lifestyle management, neurologists tell
According to the International Classification of Headache Disorders, third edition, headaches are classified into 14 categories with further subclassifications. (Representative Photo)
One out of every seven people suffers from migraine and the chronic kind affects two per cent of the world population. Migraine is the manifestation of our stressful lifestyles and the shooting pain associated with it can be as debilitating as an acute physical injury. So much so that it is still among the most common causes of lost work time and lowered quality of life in 90 per cent of sufferers with an attack lasting anything from four hours to three days.

However, with the right awareness, pain and lifestyle management protocols, one can get through the phase. As part of the migraine awareness month, experts at a webinar debated the need to identify the signs, triggers and avoid dependence on painkillers. Most sufferers get a painful attack once or twice a month. If the condition is chronic, an individual gets headaches more often. Chronic migraine lasts for 15 or more days in a month, for at least three months, and intensifies for at least eight days. It is the second most disabling condition worldwide, the experts added.

Headache disorders are among the top ten causes of disability and are some of the most frequent medical complaints: almost everybody has experienced them, at least 10% of adults everywhere are sometimes disabled by headaches and up to 3% live with them on more days than not. Hence, experts feel, there is a need for early diagnosis and specialised care.

Dr Anil Venkitachalam, Consultant – Neurology and Movement Disorders, Nanavati Max Super Specialty Hospitals, told The Indian Express that migraine has always been prevalent but nowadays the awareness and knowledge about it had increased. “As a result, more affected individuals are coming to seek medical help. The numbers are increasing due to lifestyle issues, improper diet and stress. Lack of exercise is also another contributory factor,” he said.

He, however, ruled out that migraines cause a stroke. “Migraines generally do not cause a stroke. In fact the association between stroke and migraine is weak and a few anecdotal reports have been noted. However, since both migraine and stroke share similar symptoms, they are often confused or misdiagnosed. Very rarely overuse of drugs that are used to treat a migraine attack like ergot or triptan-containing medication can lead to a stroke,” the neurologist said.
According to the International Classification of Headache Disorders, third edition, headaches are classified into 14 categories with further subclassifications. It is therefore imperative to differentiate a chronic Migraine from the rest. It usually begins with less frequent headaches that progress to a more frequent pattern. Several other risk factors have been implicated with migraine pain progressing into persistent pain.

“Chronic migraine develops over time and is a result of factors such as obesity, excessive consumption of caffeine, irregular sleeping patterns, stress and genetic disposition amongst others,” Dr Venkitachalam said. He further emphasised how it affected more women than men.

“Women are three times more affected by chronic migraine than men. Typically, women are worst hit in their thirties, when the consequences of days lost to the debilitating pain can be tremendous. This is due to the fluctuation of a hormone called estrogen, which in women, contributes to the development of chronic migraines. While in childhood, the migraine is more prevalent in boys. However, with the influence of estrogen, the prevalence in women rises,” he said while addressing the webinar.

Dr Rishi Jain, Medical Director, AbbVie, said that chronic migraine is an under-recognized and an under-treated condition. A timely diagnosis and appropriate supervision can significantly improve the quality of life. Chronic migraine treatment starts with managing lifestyle changes such as adopting an exercise plan, managing stress, staying hydrated along with identifying headache triggers. It is important to keep a headache diary which is useful in recording details of your migraine attacks or headache, such as possible triggers, duration, severity. This diary can prove helpful during a diagnosis, Dr Jain advised.

Patients, who frequently self-medicate with analgesics and painkillers to treat headache episodes, must contact a specialised neurologist early to avoid headache chronification and medication overuse disorders, the experts suggested.

**High blood pressure**

**These four food items can help control high blood pressure; find out**

Foods like spinach, kale and lettuce are high in potassium, magnesium and calcium, and can be added to the diet, suggests nutritionist Nmami Agarwal(The Indian Express: 20220606)

https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/health/four-food-items-help-control-high-blood-pressure-7937656/
If you are someone who suffers from high blood pressure issues and are looking for simple remedies, know that there are some specific food items that you can add to your diet to control BP.

**Piles**

**Piles in women: Expert shares the causes, symptoms, and treatment**
"Once you spot any of these symptoms, it is important to seek appropriate treatment without any delay," (The Indian Express: 20220606)

[Link](https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/health/expert-symptoms-causes-treatment-piles-women-constipation-7894567/)

constipationAyurveda recommends avoiding these foods to manage constipation. (Source: Getty Images/Thinkstock)

Not just men, even a majority of women experience piles, also known as hemorrhoids. “A large number of women are diagnosed with this ailment. Hemorrhoids or piles are swollen veins present in the lower part of the anus and rectum,” said Dr Neeta Modi, founder, House of Doctors.

Also Read | Three times spurt in piles, fissure cases among 15-50 year olds amid pandemic: Doctors

Causes

Certain factors such as eating junk and spicy food, constipation, lifting heavy weights, pregnancy, lack of exercise, and stress can lead to this problem.

Those suffering from this condition will exhibit symptoms such as unbearable pain, bleeding near the anus, and inflammation. “Once you spot any of these symptoms, it is important to seek appropriate treatment without any delay,” said Dr Modi.

**Treatment**

*Medication, surgery, and certain lifestyle modifications can be beneficial for those diagnosed with piles.

*Stool softeners and laxatives can help one to pass stools, and reduce pain from piles.

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*Corticosteroid creams and ointments help to lower inflammation, pain, and itching. But, opt for these things only after consulting a doctor.
Laser hemorrhoidoplasty (LHP) is a minimally invasive, safe, less painful, precise, and effective procedure to help patients with piles. One can resume work soon after the procedure. It is a safer technique with postoperative complications such as bleeding, pain, stenosis, shorter hospital stay, minimal blood loss during surgery and the patient can resume daily activities with ease.

Also Read | Why getting more fibre in our daily diet is important

Women having piles should use a cushion while sitting on the chair. Try to exercise or stretch from time to time in order to avoid this problem.

Eat a fibre-rich diet to regulate bowel movement and prevent constipation. Don’t forget to have beans, broccoli, avocado, whole grains, strawberry, almonds, bananas, oats, oranges, corn, broccoli, quinoa, chickpeas, apple, and spinach.

Stay hydrated by drinking enough water. Avoid junk, spicy, oily, and canned food that can further trigger the symptoms of piles.

diet Adding more vegetables and fruits to your diet can help (Source: Getty Images/Thinkstock)

Stress can aggravate piles. So, de-stress by opting for relaxation techniques such as yoga and meditation.

Take a Sitz bath or hip bath by soaking your anal area in plain warm water for 10 to 15 minutes at least twice a day. This will relieve the pain due to piles.

Blood transfusion: From risk factors to care, all you need to know about the procedure

Usually it takes upto 4 hours to complete a transfusion; in emergencies, it can be transfused even at a faster rate, said Dr Manjusha Agarwal

Blood transfusion: Here's what to consider before blood transfusions (Source: Getty Images/Thinkstock)

Two patients died at a hospital in Odisha’s Keonjhar district allegedly due to wrong blood group transfusion. A probe has been ordered into the incident for the alleged negligence on the part of a hospital attendant and two technicians of the blood bank, according to reports.

**Blood transfusions**

**Why are blood transfusions done? (The Indian Express: 20220606)**


Blood transfusion helps replace blood lost to injury or during surgery, or any such medical conditions. “Generally, RBC (red blood cell) transfusions are performed with the intention to
increase arterial oxygen content and thus oxygen delivery to the tissues,” according to a study published in National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI).

All tests are carried out to ascertain the compatibility of the transfused blood. During blood transfusion, a small needle is placed in the vein of your arm through which blood is transfused. Medical staff monitors all the vital parameters when transfusion is being done, said Dr Manjusha Agarwal, Senior Consultant-Internal Medicine at Global Hospital Parel Mumbai. She added that it usually it takes “upto 4 hours to complete a transfusion, in emergencies, it can be transfused even at a faster rate.”

Risk factors

The critical thing to understand is that “if you receive blood that is not compatible with your blood, your body produces antibodies to destroy the donor’s blood cells. This is called transfusion reaction”, said the expert.

According to Dr Agarwal, transfusion reaction can be in the form of fever, hives and itching. “In severe cases, lung injury can happen. Bacteria present in donors can cause infection in the recipient. Acute kidney injury due to hemolytic reaction can also occur,” Dr Manjusha explained.

Also Read |Liver transplant: New hope for patients as doctors overcome blood group hurdle
How to prevent human error when receiving blood

According to Dr Sangeeta Agarwal, senior consultant, Department of Transfusion Medicine, Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurugram,

**Boost for boosters: On Corbevax as booster dose**

**Boost for boosters: On Corbevax as booster dose (The Hindu: 20220606)**

https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/boost-for-boosters-the-hindu-editorial-on-corbevax-as-booster-dose/article65497241.ece

With the approval of Corbevax as a booster dose, India will have a heterologous shot With the Indian drug regulator greenlighting Corbevax as a booster dose for all adults above 18 years who have received two doses of either Covishield or Covaxin as part of primary vaccination, a heterologous booster shot has come a step closer to being administered to people. Though booster shots have been administered since January 10 beginning with health-care and frontline workers, and people over 60 with comorbidities, India has been using the same vaccine for both primary vaccination and booster (homologous boosting). In clinical trials, a booster dose using a vaccine that is different from the one used for primary vaccination — technically called heterologous boosting — produced higher immune responses when compared with a same vaccine for primary and booster vaccination. A trial by the Christian Medical College, Vellore, too found the same result. As expected, Bio E’s phase-3
heterologous booster vaccine trial using Corbevax in people who have received two doses of either Covaxin or Covishield did produce significantly higher immune responses. But with the control group not receiving a homologous booster shot but only a placebo, the trial failed to bring out the enhanced immune responses by using Corbevax as a heterologous booster. Any vaccine administered as a booster — immaterial of being homologous or heterologous — months after primary vaccination will, by default, increase the immune responses. The trial has thus only shown that Corbevax as a heterologous booster increases the immune responses but failed to show that heterologous boosting with this vaccine produces superior immune responses than homologous boosting with Covishield or Covaxin. It is all the more surprising that the booster trial used a placebo for the control arm as even the phase-3 clinical trial to study the immunogenicity of Corbevax for primary vaccination used the comparator vaccine Covishield for the control group.

With Corbevax being approved as a heterologous booster based on a poorly designed heterologous booster trial, the drug regulator can be expected to soon greenlight Covishield and Covaxin as heterologous boosters based on the results of the CMC Vellore trial. Especially as the trial clearly demonstrated the advantages of heterologous boosting compared with using the same vaccine for primary vaccination and boosting. While the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI) is quite likely to approve Corbevax as a heterologous booster shot without much delay, it remains to be seen whether it greenlights it for all adults above 18 years. Given the greater likelihood of NTAGI approving Corbevax as a heterologous booster, the Government is not likely to side step the expert group, as in mid-March. As booster shots have been rolled out for all adults above 18 years, the Government should not hurry to approve Corbevax without NTAGI’s nod.

Health Ministry guidelines

Explained | What are the Health Ministry guidelines on monkeypox? (The Hindu: 20220606)

https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/health/explained-what-are-the-health-ministry-guidelines-on-monkeypox/article65493818.ece

Why is India on alert? What are the likely origins, symptoms and modes of transmission? The story so far: India’s Health Ministry has issued guidelines on the management of monkeypox disease. So far, no cases of the virus have been confirmed in India but reports of the virus’ spread in non-endemic countries have led to guidelines being issued.
Inhaled vaccine

Inhaled vaccine to be more effective (The Hindu: 20220606)

https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/inhaled-vaccine-to-be-more-effective/article65493680.ece

Researchers in Toronto are conducting human trials of the vaccine. A multidisciplinary team from the McMaster University, Toronto is working to make inhaled vaccines a reality.

Fiona Smaill, Professor of Pathology and Molecular Medicine, McMaster University, and a part of the multidisciplinary team, said that they are testing a next-generation COVID-19 vaccine that the earlier research in animals suggests will last longer, will be more effective and stand up well to future variants of the virus.

“Before COVID-19 emerged, our team of researchers at McMaster University were working to develop a new inhaled form of vaccine delivery that could finally take on one of the most challenging respiratory infections — tuberculosis — still a scourge in low- and middle-income countries and in remote areas across the globe. In Canada, it disproportionately affects people living in Inuit Nunangat and First Nations living on reserve,” she said.

The COVID-19 pandemic, being truly global, created a huge demand for vaccines, such as the now-familiar ones from Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca.

These vaccines have got us through the immediate crisis, as the COVID-19 virus was spreading rapidly, and have served us well, preventing serious illness and death in countries where vaccines were available.

“These vaccines represent great strides, but they are not as effective in all populations, nor are they as robust against new variants as they are against the original strain of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19,” she said.

She added that after decades of work, the progress made was steady, but slow.

She added that her team’s research suggests that the next-generation COVID-19 vaccine that they are currently testing will be more effective for longer use, and will protect against new variants.

“We are conducting human trials of our new COVID-19 vaccine. The phase one clinical study is evaluating safety of the vaccine, as well as testing for evidence of immune responses in blood and the lungs. Our new multivalent vaccine, manufactured for our clinical trial in the Robert E. Fitzhenry Vector Laboratory, targets multiple viral proteins, both the spike protein on the surface and also the proteins inside the virus,” she said.
**Monkeypox virus**

**Monkeypox virus mutates at a higher rate (The Hindu:20220606)**

https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/monkeypox-virus-mutates-at-a-higher-rate/article65491161.ece

The mutation pattern does not conclusively prove sustained human-to-human transmission. As of June 1, 2022, over 550 lab-confirmed monkeypox cases have been reported from 30 countries, the World Health Organization (WHO) said at a press briefing. These countries are predominantly in Europe and North America, which are not endemic for monkeypox virus. With 190 cases as on May 30, the outbreak in the U.K. is the largest so far, with Spain (132 cases) and Portugal (132 cases) being the other countries with a large number of monkeypox cases.

The WHO once again stressed that the large number of cases detected in more than two dozen countries within a short time interval suggests that there “may

**‘Infodemic’**

**‘Infodemic’ on immunity boosters (The Hindu: 20220606)**


India has witnessed a steep rise in the number of people seeking information on social media related to COVID-19 and immunity.

India has witnessed a steep rise in the number of people seeking information on social media related to COVID-19 and immunity. | Photo Credit: M. Srinath

Study tracks search trends in food and its impact during the pandemic

What were the most searched and consumed foods during the COVID pandemic in India? Top nutrition scientists in the country say that Indians gorged on Vitamin C-rich fruits, zinc supplements and traditional supplements like ginger and garlic, while opting to stay away from non-vegetarian foods, frozen foods and Chinese cuisine.

Scientists studying the search trends in foods explain that though the search interest in Ayurvedic Kadha (a decoction of spices and herbs) was found to be very high, the usage was markedly low.
“Rise in COVID-19 cases had a direct association with the search trends,’’ said Dr. Subba Rao M. Gavaravarapu, scientist and head, Nutrition Information, Communication and Health Education Division, ICMR-National Institute of Nutrition, who headed the study titled “Impact of ‘infodemic in pandemic’ on food and nutrition related perceptions and practices of Indian Internet users”.

Published in PLoS One, a peer-reviewed open access scientific journal, the study explained that the uncontrolled spread of (mis)information, news and propaganda related to COVID-19 created an ‘infodemic’ leading to panic and unscientific practices among the masses.

Social media tips

TB

Community involvement aiding battle against TB in Assam (The Hindu: 20220606)


According to the World Health Organization, India bears about a quarter of the world’s TB burden. File image of an X-ray of a tuberculosis patient for representation

According to the World Health Organization, India bears about a quarter of the world’s TB burden. File image of an X-ray of a tuberculosis patient for representation | Photo Credit: Nissar Ahmad

Government sets goal of reducing tuberculosis infection rate from 217 per lakh in 2015 to 44 per lakh by 2025

GUWAHATI

Involving the community has helped devise strategies to break psychological barriers in the battle against tuberculosis in Assam and three other States, an initiative by a Karnataka-based trust has revealed.

The Karnataka Health Promotion Trust (KHPT) has been running a USAID-supported project on TB across four States — Assam, Bihar, Karnataka and Telangana — targeting the most vulnerable groups, such as mining and industrial workers, tea garden workers, migrants, the urban vulnerable, and tribal people.

The KHPT’s Assam project covers tea plantation workers in Dibrugarh, the tribal population in Baksa, and the urban vulnerable in Kamrup (Metro) district.

“A total of 625 TB patients and caregivers benefited from 99 care and support group meetings involving 315 community structures. The project clearly shows how community structures
have contributed to TB response in the three districts, and their initiative has contributed to 72,168 [individuals] being screened,” Prasenjit Das, the project’s Assam head said.

KHPT’s programme director Rehana Begam said the project had begun with conducting a primary behavioural study and webinars to assess and dive deep into the contexts, barriers and other nuances surrounding the populations vulnerable to TB.

“A mapping exercise was subsequently undertaken to identify vulnerable clusters for implementing the planned initiatives and developing behavioural change solutions so that people overcome stigma and gender issues and come forward for detection and treatment,” she said.

“Concurrently, we focused on creating an environment of encouragement for the TB patient and caregivers by involving TB survivors who have experienced these problems and who extend support and take them through this journey. What is critical is the community voice that informs our strategy and every step of the action,” Ms. Begam said.

Avijit Basu, the State TB officer in Assam’s Department of Health Services, said the State government has been working on the goal of reducing the TB infection rate from 217 per lakh in 2015 to 44 per lakh by 2025 under the ongoing National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme.

According to the World Health Organization, India bears about a quarter of the world’s TB burden, with the disease killing close to half a million people in the country annually.

### Food security

**Umbrella scheme may push food security (Hindustan Times: 20220606)**

https://epaper.hindustantimes.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=6604e02acc&imageview=0

The Union government may further strengthen its food security programmes under an umbrella scheme and tamper-proof it to prevent tweaking by states that could disrupt delivery channels and divert subsidised grains for beneficiaries, people familiar with the development said.

Amid the Covid-19 pandemic and soaring inflation, the Centre provided ration under food security schemes, such as the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and the 5kg free dry rations to 800 million poor every month under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY).

The government is now reviewing such schemes to see how they could be further strengthened, the people said, requesting anonymity.
India’s retail inflation rose to an eight-year high at 7.8% in April on surging food and fuel prices.

“Proposals under consideration may also include further extension of PMGKAY, besides plugging any loophole that could allow states to usurp the centre’s scheme through minor tweaking for political gains as that could lead to leakage of subsidies and diversion of grains to unscrupulous elements,” one of them said.

Kidney and Liver Transplantation (Dainik Bhasker 20220606)

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Positive Thoughts (Dainik Bhasker 20220606)

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