

Letter to the Editor

Second wave of COVID-19 and hesitation of vaccination in India

Sir,

Amid the surge of COVID-19 cases in India have already risked its "window of opportunity" period to have ramped up its progressive and determined vaccination program. Today, as the government has the escalating threat of coronavirus variants, it has entered into the second wave, facing an uptick in COVID-19 cases. The vaccination drive-through vital is again running at a slow pace.

India will witness the most prominent and fastest vaccination program globally as the government's commitment to inoculating at least 300 million people by August 2021 is being said on many platforms.¹ We can see that the drive has fallen behind schedule as only 14,19,11,223 doses are inoculated so far by April 26, 2021, primarily to frontline workers and people above the age of 60.² In phase 2 of vaccination, people aged 45 or above are now eligible for the jab; the public willing to take vaccines is still on the lower edge of the margin. Moreover, phase 3 of the vaccination drive youth of 18 above has been scheduled from May 1, 2021. There is a fear of the constituents, efficiency, and efficacy of the available vaccines in public. Since people are reporting to have COVID-19 despite being vaccinated, this adds apprehension to the rest of population's developing fear.

Presently, India has two vaccines for immunization. First is the homegrown government-backed vaccine named Covaxin. The vaccine has an efficacy rate of 81%, as shown in the preliminary data from its phase 3 trial. India's regulators gave the vaccine an emergency approval in January. The third phase of the trial is still underway, sparking skepticism in public and raising questions from experts. The drug regulator has also given a green signal to the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, known as Covishield, for India's usage.³ However, India has stepped up its coronavirus vaccination drive amid a deadly second wave of infections. The country recorded 1,03,558 active cases on April 4, 2021, reaching a benchmark for the first time since the pandemic has hit. The documented active cases escalated rapidly to 28,13,658 on April 26, 2021. Seeing this, it's indeed a COVID storm country is going to face.

The world's biggest inoculation drive aims to cover most of its public, but it seems essential is quite challenging in rising mutant strain cases. In public, the fear of the composition and efficacy of the dose is still a concern. Following precautions and taking vaccination is the only

cure left. Here, people don't understand that wearing a helmet can reduce the injuries caused during accidents but can't prevent the accident solely. Earlier, people were cribbing that no medicine is available for COVID-19; at least with vaccines available, they should think something is better than nothing.

Similarly, vaccines available presently can't completely stop the infection from being dealt with in the body but can halt infection progression from mild to moderate or severe. Especially the elderly should get more vaccination done to decrease the rate of mortality, as vaccines can prevent the population from facing severe repercussions. People in India should understand the intensity of the mutant variants of COVID-19 and follow the precautions suggested by world health organizations and their health ministry.⁴ As India is witnessing a viral apocalypse, in our opinion, there is an urgent need for action by the public of India for vaccination, and the public should acknowledge the intensity of the situation.

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