EDITORIAL

The Role and Responsibility of Primary Health Care in COVID-19 Response in India

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ARTICLE INFO

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Primary care is the essential foundation in COVID-19 responses globally because it can meet more than 80% of people's health needs. It plays a significant role in protecting and therapeutic response in detection of COVID-19 cases, by early diagnosis, helping vulnerable people cope with their anxiety, and reducing the hospital service demand. Duringthe initial pandemic situation, the World Health Organization emphasized the role of primary care and provided interim guidance on the role of primary care in the COVID-19 response. This guide lines consists of six principles that guided the roles of primary care in this pandemic. These six principles are-

- Maintaining delivery of essential health services
- Detection and management of potential cases
- Try to avoid the risk of transmission of infection tocontacts and healthcare workers
- Increases existing surveillance such as for influenza-like illness and Severe acute respiratory infection
- Reinforce risk communication and community engagement
- Provision of COVID-19 vaccination services.

In India, primary health care act like a backbone of the health system through a big chain of community health workers, Health sub-centers, Health and wellness centers, and primary health centers. In India, primary care was in the center for COVID-19 response since the initial phase. All six principles of primary care for COVID-19 response have been applied into the action plan, which most state governments followed. Different state government imposed multiple guidelines keeping in mind these specific principles and the basis of staterequirement.

MAINTAINING ESSENTIAL HEALTH SERVICES

The COVID-19 pandemic has put huge pressure on the Indian health system. This resulted in essential health services discontinued due to the increased demand for services. It is important to maintain essential health services even during the pandemic.

As we learned from Ebola outbreak in 2014-15, at that time the number of deaths caused by measles, malaria, HIV/AIDS, and tuberculosis was much higher than Ebola. The Government of India took lessons from past incidents. It highlighted the need to maintain essential health services through the detailed guidelines to stateson starting delivery of essential health services during the COVID-19 outbreak, Provision of reproductive, maternal, new-born, child, adolescent health plus nutrition services during & after COVID-19 pandemic, Immunization Services during and after COVID-19 outbreak. In all these guidelines, community health workers' roles and rural and urban health centers are described in detail to everyone. One of the key action plans for maintaining the health service was the clear differentiation between infected and non-infected by service delivery institutions (Essential health services).

IDENTIFY AND MANAGE POTENTIAL CASES

Identification & screening, Isolation, Assess and advices are the major elements of under-identification andpotential case management. At the primary care level, micro plan for containing local transmission of COVID-19 guideline has clearly defined community health workers' role in screening through household visits, if confirmed, then contact tracing, quarantine and isolation procedure followed. These guidelines also clarify the role of the Primary health organizations in overall identification and potential case management. About 1007045 ASHAs, 2543113 Anganwadis, 83244 5 Ayush Medical officers are contributing to the primary care apparatus. Additionally, 927000 MBBS medical officers also contribute to COVID 19 response, in which the majority of medical officers belong to the primary care systems.

Preventing the infection transmission risk to contacts and health workers is at the center of any pandemic response. To minimize this, India's Government came up with specific action plan on human resources safety at thecommunity and facility. So many health workers were infected in whole country and so many are loosed their life.