

NEEDLESS COVID-19 VACCINE FEARS: A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Dear editor,

Since November 2019, the entire world is struggling to save its citizens and endeavor to normalize turmoil (Rana 2020; Jakovljevic et al. 2020). So far, more than 2 million people have lost their lives due to COVID-19 infection. The newly identified variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus engendered the situation worse, spotted in more than 60 countries. Several companies recently developed the vaccine with high efficacy, about 95% (Blakney & McKay 2021). Many European, as well as Indian governments, have started the vaccination on a large scale. Moreover, several deaths were reported after receiving inoculation in different parts of the world. For instance, 29 elders died in Norway after being vaccinated (The Indian Express 2021).

Table 1. Suggested interventions by the governments to mitigate the psychological perturbation among their citizens

- A public campaign must be run to encourage people to take a vaccine.
- A regular, accurate update on vaccination and its general adverse effect must be communicated.
- The governments must ask the pharma companies to public the data of human trials.
- The pharma companies should continuously modify the vaccine according to the new variants of the virus.
- The governments must share the data of patients with pharma companies who develop complications after receiving the vaccination.
- The patients with chronic diseases and pregnant women must be treated with some other alternative medicines until the complete risks of vaccination are revealed. If vulnerable people are vaccinated, they must be kept under observation for few weeks.
- The pharma companies and the governments must jointly start an online as well as an offline portal to overcome vaccine fears.
- A provision of the lawsuit must be provided against those spreading the scuttlebutt about vaccine on social media or other online platforms.
- A must-dos to manage stress and anxiety
- Do your research and learn as much as you can.
- Stay up to date and obtain information on the progress of vaccines from authenticated sources.
- It would be best if you always listened to the officials you trust.
- Think about the potential benefits compared to the risks.
- Make decisions in your best interest.

A 56-year-old physician from the USA lost his life after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. Similarly, in the first phase of vaccination, six health workers who were vaccinated died in India. The situation in the Philippines is pointing towards the psychological trepidation where people are more afraid of immunizations than the COVID-19 infection. These reports heighten the fear of vaccination (Japan Times 2021). As a result, in India, the most searched index on Google was "How to make COVID vaccine at home" after the vaccination drive started (Times Now News 2021). The worldwide trend shows that the term 'anaphylaxis' was searched excessively on the internet as it was all over the news, which created an impression that vaccination may be perilous. Furthermore, the Google searches for indices, i.e., "fear of needles" and "Trypanophobia," have been increased after the announcement of the COVID-19 vaccine, signifying the phobia of injection. Needless fear and confusion can put a highly populated country like India into new threats of COVID-19. However, it is evident that the infection rate has slowed down since the start of immunizations (University of Oxford 2021).

In the first phase of vaccination, the Indian government has decided to inoculate 30 million frontline workers. However, the slow rate of registration for vaccination has revealed psychological consternation among the frontline workers. The situation is improving as inexorable rises were recorded in registration in some states, including Maharashtra, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Jharkhand. The reason for the rise is that the senior doctors took the first dose of vaccine to embolden their junior colleagues. However, still, superfluous confusion can be observed among common people. Therefore, it is recommended that the government must intervene immediately to mitigate the current situation of skepticism. A few of the suggestions are provided in Table 1.

The year 2020 has been challenging for everyone, and the next most significant stressor will be vaccine distribution, which will impact the frontline workers before the common people. But a large population is reluctant or opposed to taking immunizations. For the distrustful and dubious, the proposed comprehensible interventions and communication strategies should be adopted to invigorate people toward accepting the COVID vaccine. In addition, it is also suggested that public health officials should make a concerted effort to understand the reasons for mistrust. These efforts can provide the opportunity to make the COVID vaccine a new normal.

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