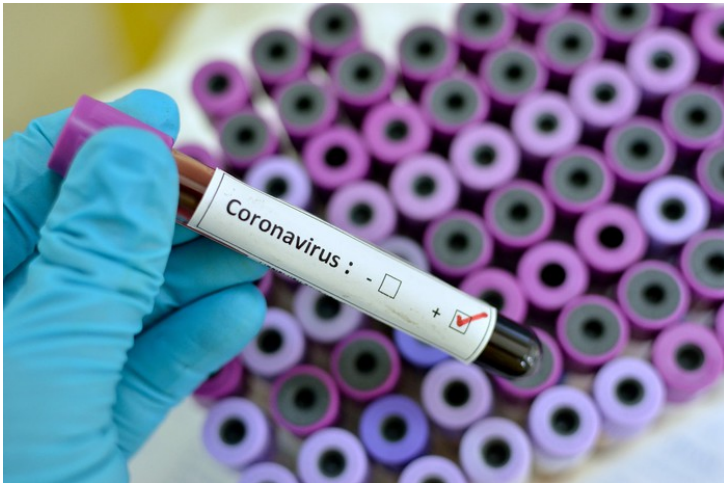


NATHEALTH calls for collaborative fight against COVID-19

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Public awareness and a united concerted effort by the public and private health care sectors is needed along with the cooperation of the citizens to contain this new novel viral epidemic



Apex healthcare industry body NATHEALTH has called for a unified response to arrest the cascading impact of Covid 19 and said that private sector would work collaboratively with the Government to ward off the disease before it takes Greater proportions.

Time is of essence and therefore it is imperative to diagnose and prevent the spread of the disease at the earliest, NATHEALTH emphasised in a statement issued recently.

As per WHO guidelines, Government of India has initiated a number of critical measures and build up necessary reserves based on planned contingencies for critical medical supplies and reduce cascading effect of coronavirus impact on human lives. These include potential response scenarios for containing travel related cases reported within India, local transmission of COVID, large outbreaks and the disaster response scenario of an endemic. Some of the steps include Inter-ministerial coordination, Early Detection through Points of Entries Screening, Community Surveillance through Integrated Disease Surveillance Program, Early Diagnosis, Buffer Stock and Risk communication for creating awareness among public to follow preventive public health measures.

Dr H Sudarshan Ballal, President, NATHEALTH said, "Private sector players will be happy to collaborate with the Govt to augment the diagnostics/ treatment capacity as was done in 2009 when H1N1 had started spreading incessantly. Covid19 has surfaced again in India and we do believe that we need to be as alert as possible in containing this disease without creating any panic. Though the disease is more infectious than the regular flu it seems less fatal than some of the other epidemics we have faced."

Public awareness and a united concerted effort by the public and private health care sectors is needed along with the cooperation of the citizens to contain this new novel viral epidemic.

Siddhartha Bhattacharya, Secretary General, NATHEALTH said, "It is high time to be prepared and agile. Healthcare sector in India stands united at this juncture to respond to the evolving scenario. We must prevent the spread through Government and citizen led public health measures while putting in place a unified preparedness strategy to treat COVID-19 across India."

On behalf of industry, NATHEALTH makes the following recommendations for consideration of Government:

- Include private sector early in contingency planning to potential scenarios at both central and state levels in India
- Create a strategic pool of private sector hospitals, diagnostic labs, protective equipment supply, medicines and frontline workers. Demarcate their roles in different contingency scenarios.
- Enroll private sector diagnostic centers early- one or few government labs will not be able to provide diagnosis for large scale testing, without which the risk of infection will increase. Most people will not go to hospitals and isolate themselves while waiting for test results unless we can give results in 24 hours. US FDA has now allowed private labs meeting accreditation standards to work with government to test. Similar proactive approach is also required for hospitals
- Collate a list of clinical experts across Public and Private sector to review the treatment protocols for screening, isolation, treatment of COVID-19 infections and ensure appropriate standardized quality of care. Build up capacity and expertise available to use next generation sequencing for the Viral DNA at short notice
- Global data for this virus should be open sourced so that researchers and technocrats around the world can create AI based protocols to screen for COVID-1
- We must collate the data assiduously for posterity and also to monitor the progression of the disease. Towards this end, the Govt should circulate the Formats so that the Private partners fill the data as is being advised in the case of program "Nikshay"- for eradication of TB.
- Create a dedicated fund to deal with COVID-19 and ensure priority financing to sustainably deal with this public health crisis across both public and private sector. Given the utmost importance of the matter, the Govt may like to make diagnosis affordable at the hands of the patients so that they don't shy away from undertaking the test. As of now the kits are not manufactured in India and thus it will be of great help if the Govt could waive the import duty and local tariffs on the Kits (raw material/ reagents) for the limited purpose of fighting Covid 19.