

Apollo Hospitals launches Project Kavach against COVID-19

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Apollo Hospitals, India's largest integrated healthcare chain, has announced the launch of a comprehensive and integrated response plan to take the battle to COVID-19. The announcement was made at a virtual media conference held online with the top management from Chennai and Hyderabad addressing the press across the country. Titled 'Project Kavach', which means 'shield', the response plan is a comprehensive approach that encompasses all aspects from information, screening and assessment, testing, to readying the infrastructure for quarantine and treatment. The culmination of a month of preparation, Project Kavach will bring together all the resources of Apollo Hospitals to fight for the people of the country against this pandemic.

Dr. Prathap C. Reddy, Chairman, Apollo Hospitals Group said, "We are fighting a war not just for this generation but also for the generations to come. The novel coronavirus pandemic knows no borders, makes no distinction between religion, caste, creed, colour or social status. It will require for all of us to come together, young and old as one to 'Break the Chain'. The entire Apollo Hospitals family is ready to go beyond the call of duty and work with the Government to emerging victorious in this battle. Project Kavach will augment the Government's initiatives to address the COVID-19 pandemic and is part of our pledge to partner with the Government and be at the frontlines in this critical battle."

Shobana Kameneni, Executive Vice Chairperson, Apollo Hospitals Group said, "Apollo Hospitals has specially designed an AI-based Coronavirus Risk Assessment scan for screening and initial assessment, which is available in the form of an app and on the website (<https://covid.apollo247.com/>). The Risk assessment scan, which is available in 6 regional languages, will guide individuals about the potential risk of having the Virus through simple interactive questions. Based on the risk level, people are guided to contact the certified help center." She further added "Over 6 million people have already gone through the screening on the Apollo 24 I 7 app and website and it is expected that over 10 million Indians will use this scan to know their risk score. The digital Apollo 24 I 7 app also offers virtual and telephony consultation with facility to tele-connect with all doctors at Apollo Hospitals enabling patients to seek healthcare while staying at home.

The 3800 Apollo pharmacies across 18 states will be pressed into action to serve people with all the medication, consumables and supplements as required. Stocks have been doubled, prices will be strictly monitored and controlled, and home delivery capability has been enhanced. It is estimated that the capacity can be ramped up from the 500,000 people served on a daily basis to 1 million if required."

Sangita Reddy, Joint Managing Director, Apollo Hospitals Group said, "Testing is a critical part of breaking the chain, most Apollo centers have been cleared for COVID-19 testing, the full infrastructure is expected to be in place and full scale testing to start by the end of March. There will be provision for home collection of samples as well as Drive Through Testing. In-hospital testing will be discouraged except for inpatients. Dedicated, fever clinics are being setup to screen people. People who qualify under the criteria for tests would enter via the drive through, make the payment as per the government recommended charges and then be tested.

She further added "Once we start extensive screening, number of positive cases will come up, which need to be strictly isolated. This is not possible in many Indian homes where 6-7 people share common accommodation and toilet. Soon we will be launching "Project Stay I", an innovative strategy to create medical rooms in hotels/hostels with light medical supervision for quarantine and creating a barrier before people come into the hospitals. This would address the situation where over 50% of the cases need only isolation and paracetamol. These medical rooms will be rolled out in the following cities – Chennai, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Bangalore and Delhi, starting with approximately 50 in each city, going up by 50 rooms every three days, to reach an eventual target of 5000 rooms across the country. These will be calibrated as per the need".

The importance of up-scaling the infrastructure is to be prepared in a scenario where each virus loaded patient can infect up to 4-5 people. At this stage we should also be able to also address the anxiety of these patients in getting access to the right treatment. With "Project Stay-I" we expect to help over 10000-15000 patients in a month and prevent over 50 lakh infections.

Preetha Reddy, Vice Chairperson, Apollo Hospitals Group said, "At the same time, we are also cognizant of the need to ensure continuity of care for its existing patients.

She further added "Apollo Hospitals has the necessary protocols in place to manage patients who test positive for COVID-19 at all stages. A dedicated healthcare team trained in various aspects of the diseases including selfprotection, identification of symptoms and information flow in case of suspected cases will be assigned for the assessment and testing."

In locations such as Andhra Pradesh, Bhubaneshwar where the government has set aside separate hospitals for COVID care, Apollo is assisting them by managing a certain number of beds within large government hospitals.

The group is also preparing for the next stage of community transmission of the virus. She further added, "While we hope that community transmission does not take place on a large scale, we need to be prepared for the eventuality. This stage will see a constant requirement of highly specialized treatment for the critically ill. Apollo Hospitals with its network of 70 hospitals also has the largest number of isolation and ICU facilities in the private sector. There will be over 250 beds which can be enhanced to 500 beds, created only to treat the critically ill at any given time. We expect to give advanced care to over 2000 patients a month."