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HEAL Health organises Infodemic Pandemic eSummit

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According to an AIIMS doctor, there is complete mis-information on the third wave of COVID that will impact children



HEAL Health recently organised an Infodemic Pandemic eSummit – HEAL-Thy Samvaad, Episode-19 in knowledge partnership with HEAL Foundation, Indian Public Health Association, DPU, and Makhanlal Chaturvedi National University of Journalism & Communication (MCNUJC).

Dr Sanjay Kumar Rai, President, IPHA, Professor, Dept. of Community Medicine, AIIMS, New Delhisaid, “The combination of misinformation and disinformation, which is called infodemic, has been happening since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the recent example of misinformation is that – the third wave of COVID will impact children – this is complete misinformation as there is no scientific basis behind it. We see people wear hand gloves perceiving that it will protect them from infection, but it doesn’t help in this, on the contrary, it helps spread the virus as while wearing hand gloves, you don’t wash hands and touch other surfaces – in this way, there is the probability of spreading the virus. To keep people away from infodemic, community education is required, wherein the role of public health experts are significant.”

Prof K Sekar Head, Centre for Psycho-Social Support in Disaster Management, National Institute of Mental Health & Neurosciences (NIMHANS) said, “Immediately after COVID came into India, there was the reaction from 95 per cent of the people, showing mental health burden and the 5 per cent who didn’t react, had no source of communication. Although the mental burden decreased gradually, yet COVID-19 has been a source of complex, multifaceted stress for many. Inadequate crisis communication can bring dire personal and economic consequences.”

Dr Rajib Das Gupta, Chairperson, Centre of Social Medicine & Community Health, JNU, New Delhimentioned, “In the context of COVID-19 pandemic, infodemic was described as an over-abundance of information – some accurate or some not makes it hard for people to find the trustworthy sources and the reliable guidance when they needed. Interestingly, the World Economic Forum cautions these as digital wildfires.”

Dr Amitav Banerjee, Prof & Head of Community Medicine, Dr DY Patil Medical College, Pune stated, “Misinformation would be the act of omission, misinformation may be the act of commission and misinformation may be some mala fide vested interest. We need to have an open debate. Omission and commission by the government authorities and scientists are required. Public health professionals from top to bottom are required to be deputed. Good scientific debates are required for transparency.”

Dr Chandrakant Lahariya, Vaccine Public Policy & Health Systems Expert said, “The government should include specialist health communication agencies for running coordinated behaviour change campaigns and a professionally drafted centralised communication strategy, which should be followed by all stakeholders combined.”

Founder & CEO, HEAL Health, Dr Swadeep Srivastava said, “Dr Srivastava said, “With the support of the Indian Public Health Association (IPHA), we are all set to start India Health Infodemic Fact-Checking Network (IHIFCN), which would be India’s first dedicated fact-checking forum for healthcare news stories/information going out in the public domain predominantly through social media. The IHIFCN would be committed to promoting excellence in fact-checking.”