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Editorial

Public health – The saviour!

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Sustaining life in any form is a task worth accomplishing. The more intricate the life form the more horrendous the challenge! Thus, sustaining human life; the most complex in the evolution ladder requires maximum wit. The contribution of public health in maintaining and uplifting human life is unparalleled. Public health as a discipline has proved its worth time and again. In the face of any health adversity, the world commune has always looked at it as a saviour and the discipline has never disappointed.

This is the only health discipline with the courage to take on the unknown and devise a viable solution. The examples are aplenty. Be it cholera, plague, HIV, or the most recent COVID pandemic; it is the public health and its courageous warriors who had fought against all odds to come up with a solution.^{1–3}

The important public health master strokes are the interplay of delicate balancing acts involving human liberty, dignity, professionalism, trust, solidarity, stewardship, and accountability to name a few.⁴

On many occasions, we have to restrict individual liberty by imposing sanctions by the nature of isolation, quarantine, etc. This is done to safeguard the public at large against the spread of the disease or health events. This ethical compromise has paid big dividends. Incredible examples are the Spanish flu, SARS, and COVID-19.^{5–7} These restrictions should be proportional meaning not to exceed what is necessary to address the actual level of risk to or

critical needs of the community.

The real test of professionalism comes alive in the face of a crisis. No crisis is ever bigger than a health crisis and no professionalism is ever bigger than what is expressed by healthcare providers. Their sacrifices towards their own health, to family and friends during rendering health care to the sick, and to be sick population in the face of a healthcare crisis are unparalleled. Maintaining equity during a pandemic is a tough call to make. Difficult decisions need to be made about which health services have to be permitted and which ones can be deferred.

Maintaining different stakeholders' trust at the time of health emergencies is an uphill task. If the trust is breached the entire exercise will nose dive. Transparency in the health approach is the key to upholding trust.

Global solidarity and a collaborative approach become paramount at the time of pandemics. Nations have to see above their vested interest in terms of traditional values, sovereignty, security, and territoriality.⁸

One of the important dimensions of health crisis management is ensuring stewardship. Decisions on resource allocation, upholding trust, and ensuring ethical practices are all governed by good stewardship skills.^{9,10} Accountability for each stakeholder is another master stroke. This ensures collective responsibility sharing and feedback.

Thus, all put together can bring the desired result in the wake of any health challenges.

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1. Conflict of Interest

None.

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