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## Editorial

# Nurturing mental health in the post-pandemic landscape: A call to action

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As the world emerges from the grips of the COVID-19 pandemic, it becomes increasingly evident that the scars left behind extend far beyond the realms of physical health. The toll on mental well-being has been profound, demanding our attention and coordinated efforts to address the unprecedented challenges that individuals face in this post-pandemic era. According to a scientific brief released by the World Health Organization (WHO) in March, 2022 global prevalence of anxiety and depression increased by a massive 25%. All the countries around the world were asked to come together and step up their mental health services and support.<sup>1</sup>

The pandemic has acted as a relentless stressor, unravelling the delicate threads that bind our collective mental resilience. From the palpable fear of infection to the isolation imposed by lockdowns, the toll on mental health has been pervasive and diverse. As we navigate this new normal, it is imperative that we prioritize and destigmatize discussions surrounding mental health.

One of the fundamental pillars of post-pandemic mental health care is accessibility. We must recognize the critical need for affordable and accessible mental health services. Telehealth solutions have proven to be a lifeline during the pandemic, providing a bridge between individuals and mental health professionals.<sup>2</sup> Governments, in collaboration with healthcare providers, must work towards making these

services more widely available, breaking down barriers that may hinder access to crucial mental health support.

The workplace, a space where many spent a significant portion of their lives, must become a bastion of mental health support. Employers are urged to redefine workplace norms, fostering environments that prioritize employee well-being. Flexible work arrangements, mental health days, and proactive initiatives to reduce workplace stress can contribute significantly to creating a culture that values mental health as much as physical health.<sup>3</sup>

Public awareness campaigns must be intensified to eradicate the stigma that still shrouds mental health issues. Education is paramount, as dispelling myths and misconceptions can pave the way for a more empathetic society.<sup>4</sup> By promoting understanding and compassion, we can create an environment where individuals feel comfortable seeking help without fear of judgment.

The post-pandemic era is an opportune moment for governments to reassess their healthcare priorities. Mental health should be at the forefront of public health initiatives, with increased funding allocated to mental health services and community-based programs. Investing in mental health is an investment in the overall well-being and productivity of a nation.

Innovation, particularly in the realm of technology, can play a pivotal role in transforming mental health support. Mobile applications, online resources, and virtual communities can provide individuals with tools to

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manage stress, anxiety, and depression. Embracing these technological advancements can enhance the reach and effectiveness of mental health interventions.

A survey by Indian Psychiatry Society indicated that since the beginning of COVID 19 pandemic, 20% more people suffered from poor mental health.<sup>5</sup> Young and women exhibited higher levels of stress and mental health deterioration. Students were also severely affected by the lockdowns. Ultimately, individuals must be empowered to take control of their mental well-being. Encouraging self-care practices, such as mindfulness, regular exercise, and adequate sleep, can contribute to building resilience in the face of life's challenges.

As we stand on the threshold of a post-pandemic era, let us not forget the invisible battles being fought within the minds of millions. Nurturing mental health is not just a moral imperative; it is an investment in a future where individuals can thrive, societies can prosper, and the scars of the pandemic can heal. It is a collective call to action, a pledge to foster a world where mental health is not just a topic of discussion but a cornerstone of our shared humanity.

### Conflict of Interest

None.

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