

SERUM TIMES

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SERUM MEDICAL BULLETIN

From the desk of the Editor-in-Chief

Dear Doctors / Readers,

We are going to enter into a new financial year 2021-22 with a positive hope. It is expected that COVID 19 phase will subside gradually although many concerned experts think that the corona virus will stay for long but in a lesser deadly way. In mid February Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Minister of Health and Family Welfare, said that about 18-19 vaccine candidates against COVID 19 were in the pipeline and were in preclinical, clinical and advanced stage. But regarding universal vaccination many observers have reservation about India's capacity building of the programme.



At the same time it is important to know the origin of the COVID 19 virus for our future survival. This is because a 17 member WHO team's investigation now strongly suggests that virus originated from a natural reservoir in bat but unlikely to have been in Wuhan. Wuhan is miles from any bat habitats. The study also suggests that virus jumping directly from bats to humans is highly unlikely. An initial investigation too suggests the role of an intermediary host species which are yet to be confirmed by the investigation team.

The issue is going to devote to the Union Budget 21-22. The next story will discuss it elaborately. Here we like to point out the some of the salient points which WHO and Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIM-A) recently suggest after a study regarding how to deal with epidemics. We are not sure how far government of India will follow this in future.

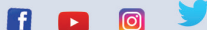
WHO and IIM-A have made several suggestions to create a roadmap for dealing with epidemics. The suggestions include a robust health surveillance system through use of technology, collection and sharing of health data with research institutes. There have been several significant suggestions for putting in place long term infrastructure to combat any epidemic that may break out in the years to come. The report is mainly for the Gujarat but it should be a suggestion for all the states in India. But this needs a big expenditure on health.

Wishing you a very healthy and prosperous new FY.

With regards,

Sanjib Acharya

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Health Sector in the Budget Gets Prominence





Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman mentioned in her recent Budget speech that the government was going to spend Rs. 2,23,846 crore in FY 21-22. The heading on health sector has changed to "health and well-being". The allocation has been increased by 137% from last year's. But the allocation includes Rs. 60,030 crore outlay on drinking water and sanitation, Rs. 2,700 crore on nutrition. But both of these are handled by separate ministries. There is also nearly Rs. 49,000 crore as Finance Commission grants and Rs. 35,000 crore for vaccination. So, the Health Ministry alone has been allotted Rs.71,000 crore in health for coming FY 21-22. But the revised estimate of the last year's spending has been Rs. 78,000 crore, a 20% up from budgeted Rs. 65,000 crore. So the observers think that actual allocation to Health department has been lower for the FY 21-22.

Allocation to other sectors

Money has been allocated to pure water supply, sanitation, nutrition and clean air is important for 'health and well-being budget'. The National Health Policy, 2017 has integrated health, water and sanitation. A good amount allocation to Jal Jeevan Mission (urban) is welcome. The access to quality water has a remarkable positive impact in health of the common people. Another important area has been programme for pneumococcal pneumonia vaccination. Budget has allocated adequately to expand the programme which has a great impact on people's health aspect. The plan for increased capital expenditure in Pradhan Mantri Atmanirbhar Swath Bharat Yojna (PMASBY) is also welcome.



The main elements of the scheme are:

-  Support for 17,788 rural and 11,024 urban Health and Wellness Centers
-  Setting up integrated public health labs in all districts and 3,382 block public health units in 11 states
-  Establishing critical care hospital blocks in 602 districts and 12 central institutions
-  Strengthening of the National Centre for Disease Control

The similar expansion of budget allocation for PM-JAY, a flagship scheme of the government launched in 2018 has reportedly decreased child mortality rates, 20% in 2019-20, in a bigger way compared to earlier years, 12% in 2015-16 (mentioned by Rajiv Kumar and U Prasad of NITI Aayog, Hindu, 18th Feb 2021). More emphasis has been given on AYUSH. In the pandemic phase Homeopathic treatment has received trust and respect of the people.

Kumar and Prasad has also pointed out that states have to act with more care to deal with situations like pandemic. Moreover on the basis of National Accounts 2017, about 66% of spending on health care in India is done by the states.

Male sex, BMI, smoking and depression all increase biological age

Aging can be measured in different ways. One is the chronological age. It is measured by date of birth. Second is the biological age. These include three things, 1) measuring the length of telomeres (little caps on the end of our chromosomes that shorten as we grow older), 2) chemical changes to our DNA (epigenetics), 3) changes to the proteins and metabolites in our bodies.

The question

Are the physical and mental age influence each other? Or whether they have a cumulative effect on our overall well-being as we age. A new research at Department of Psychiatry, Amstardam UMC, Netherlands has observed that the first to combine these individual measurements of biological age and show how they link with mental and physical health.

Methodology of the research

The team used blood samples from nearly 3,000 people taking part in the Netherlands Study of Depression and Anxiety. They applied computer modelling to create individual biological aging indicators based on five commonly used measurements: telomere length, epigenetics, gene levels, metabolites and proteomics. The five indicators were then linked back to different factors such as sex, lifestyle factors and known physical and mental disorders such as depression.

The observation of the research

Of the five biological aging indicators, only three were found to significantly interact in individuals, such



that an increase in one indicator also paralleled an increase in the other. There were many overlapping and distinct links between particular aging indicators and specific lifestyle factors or diseases. But being male, having a high body mass index (BMI), smoking and having metabolic syndrome were most consistently linked with more advanced biological aging.

The team also confirmed that depression was linked to more advanced aging measured by epigenetics, gene levels and proteomics. This suggests that biological aging is linked to both mental and physical health. This composite score had greater associations with BMI, sex, smoking, depression severity and metabolic syndrome, highlighting the interplay between different systems on cumulative biological aging.

Brenda Penninx, Professor of Psychiatric Epidemiology at the Department of Psychiatry, Amsterdam UMC reportedly said. "Taken together, our findings contribute to the understanding and identification of biological age determinants - important for the development of outcomes for clinical and population-based research."

The Journey of SERUM throughout February, 2021



Feb 21: SERUM Analysis in association with Cossipore Swapath organised free Health Checkups, Thalassemia Awareness & Thalassemia Carrier Detection Test



Feb 21: Sanjib Acharya, MD, SERUM Group present at Eighth Poets' Conference on International Mother Language Day for the publication of Gyan O Chetna Magazine



Feb 20: Monthly Zonal Meeting at SERUM Asansol



Feb 19: Alambazaar Math in association with SERUM Group organised a road show to mark the 125th return day of Swami Vivekananda from Chicago.



Feb 15: A new feather added in the cap of SERUM Group with the opening of new centre at Malda

Feb 6: Recitation Competition organised by SERUM Group at Serum Auditorium



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