

“Covid only a mild infection for most, hoarding oxygen and medicines creating a panic”, Dr Guleria says while addressing concerns and issues related to COVID19

Remdesivir no magic bullet, should not be administered in mild cases: Dr Guleria

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Doctor Randeep Guleria, Director of All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Dr. Naresh Trehan, Chairman and Managing Director, Medanta, Dr. Navneet Wig, Head of Department of Medicines, AIIMS and Dr Sunil Kumar, Director General Health Services today addressed concerns and issues related to COVID19.

Dr Randeep Guleria, while speaking on the shortage of oxygen and medicines said, “Hoarding of injections like remdesivir and oxygen in homes is creating a panic and this hoarding is causing a shortage of these medicines. COVID19 is mild infection and 85-90% people will only suffer from cold, fever, sore throat and bodyache. Only symptomatic treatment at home is enough to ride through these infections and there is no need for oxygen or remdesivir.” He added that 10-15% percent of patients with severe infections may need oxygen, remdesivir or plasma etc while less than 5% patients need ventilators or intensive care.

Furthermore, Dr Guleria clarified that remdesivir neither reduces the hospital stay nor saves lives. In moderate to severe cases, it may be able to reduce hospital stay but if administered in mild cases it can complicate matters. Remdesivir is no magic bullet and it is used in hospitals for moderate to severe cases.

On administration of oxygen to non-needy, Dr Guleria said that people who have oxygen saturation above 94 do not need oxygen as increase in oxygen saturation beyond this level would not increase oxygen in blood. However, this can cause shortage in supply of oxygen and will reduce access to oxygen for serious cases.

Dr Naresh Trehan while speaking on the steps to be taken immediately after a positive RT-PCR test, said that people should first contact local or family doctors. All the doctors are aware of the protocol to be followed and can recommend courses of medication for patients who should isolate themselves at home. Dr Trehan also advised yoga and pranayam which are helpful in maintaining lung health and added that Pronation is also helpful. Dr. Trehan reiterated the importance of double masking, distancing and hand hygiene and said the mask should seal the air passage around the nose and mouth for proper protection. He also recommended staying away from crowded places.

Speaking on oxygen demand, Dr Trehan said the demand for medical oxygen has suddenly risen in the current crisis and manufacturing facilities are stretched for supplies. Our industries however have the capacity but lack cryo-transportation. Government is actively working on this and the situation will be under control in the next five to seven days.

Dr Sunil Kumar addressed the topic of preparations of the Government to mitigate the situation and said that from no preparedness last year when Covid arrived, the Government ramped up capacity to a unique level very soon. Over 2500 laboratories were created where only one existed before the pandemic. We increased our testing capability to lakhs of tests per day, ramped up tracking and contact tracing and manufacturing of PPE kits et al. Reiterating the importance of getting vaccinated, Dr Sunil said there are negligible side effects of the vaccines and that vaccines and COVID-appropriate behaviour together can break the chain of transmission.

Dr Navneet said that we need to save our healthcare workers who will in-turn save our patients. To save our healthcare workers we need to break the chain and reduce the number of infections. To break the chain is a responsibility of all sections of society but foremost it is the responsibility of the people to undertake COVID-appropriate behaviour.