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## Opinion

# Post pandemic preparedness: Way forward to rejuvenate public health system

Sheikh Mohd Saleem<sup>1,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Dept. of Public Health Consultant, Jammu and Kashmir, India



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The Coronavirus pandemic not only swept across the globe rapidly but left many countries under its reeling attack. Many countries' established healthcare systems collapsed, and even the wealthiest nations couldn't afford to simultaneously invest their resources for critical care for millions of patients. The health services in many nations were severely disturbed and focused on the ongoing pandemic. India was at par with the top 10 infected countries worldwide, and by now, if we would have witnessed a higher rate of infectious patients converting to life-threatening illness, our under-prepared and inadequate healthcare system would have collapsed. Even if we didn't face the real wrath of the COVID, there are reasons this pandemic should be a whistleblower call for India. Our population is more susceptible to the future pandemics or epidemics, and the number of acute care admissions to the hospitals may overwhelm the health system quickly. The absence of a more robust and dependable primary and family care system accessible to the community population pushes citizens to delay or flock to the tertiary level healthcare system. The under-funded nature of the Indian healthcare system makes it extremely weak to serve people's needs. India is a nation with the highest disease burden in the world, with many preventable deaths. The burden of infectious diseases has shown a marked reduction in the previous two decades due to improved sanitation, extensive vaccination drives, improved living conditions,

and public health advancement. On top of this, the share of non-communicable diseases has shown an increasing trend because of India's epidemiological transition and lifestyle changes among the masses. Such a double burden of diseases requires an efficient primary healthcare system to manage health at the point of care facilities and a sustainable tertiary care system to deal with critical patients. The recent Coronavirus pandemic has paid a way to have a comprehensive and sustainable health care reforms for the Indian Healthcare system.

On the contrary, the rate at which Indian descend into poverty every year is also surprising because of the out-of-pocket expenditure on healthcare. Introducing Ayushman Bharat schemes, the healthcare system could gain particular attention and is considered a good starting point to see what works reasonably for the Indian healthcare system. The challenge to build a robust, cost-effective and accessible healthcare system for India is the need of an hour, and by this, India can rejuvenate its healthcare system. Investing in preparedness capacities, detecting and mitigating emergencies of all kinds is a must because the Coronavirus pandemic will not be the last one, and epidemics are scientific fact.

## Author biography

Sheikh Mohd Saleem, Health Consultant

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [saleem.900@gmail.com](mailto:saleem.900@gmail.com) (S. M. Saleem).

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