SF Community Medicine and Health

Lockdown: A Curse for Health? (Indian Scenario)

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Abstract

With the outbreak of pandemic (COVID-19), following a lockdown, the question of lockdown being a boon remains the matter of debate. Lockdown was announced in India from the month of March 2020. Though it is a boon for India to reduce the number of upcoming cases but is it a boon for the people's health? As people are banned to step out of their houses it has become difficult for people to continue their daily routine. The Shutdown of all religious places, corporate parks, educational institutes, etc. has forced the people to stay at home and work from their places. The life of the people has become steady which affects their health too. People have started gaining the weight, for some; their income has stopped as there is no work to do, develop problems like stress, depression. Children are not used to this, so a feeling of anxiety has been seen in them. Also, they have to adapt to the new method of learning which is also creating stress and strain to them. Elderly people are affected as they feel isolated and it has also become difficult to get their medication on time. Pregnant women are afraid to visit the hospitals for their follow-up. Due to work from home methods, many working women are finding it difficult to balance between their housework and office work which creates stress and this leads to hormonal imbalance in them.

Keywords: Lockdown; Curse; Anxiety; Hormonal imbalance; Health; Low-income; Working women; PCOS; Post-partum hemorrhage; Depression; Teenagers

Background

On 30 January 2020 registered the first-ever case of coronavirus (COVID-19) in India. Total 138,845 cases 57,721 recoveries and 4,021 deaths were confirmed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare by 25 May 2020 [1]. India has now the Third-largest number of confirmed cases in Asia. Mumbai, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Pune, and Kolkata are the six cities which account for around half of all reported cases in the country [1]. Due to this, the lockdown was announced in India. This banned all the industries (small scale and large scale), educational institutes, religious places, cultural and entertainment activities. This made the people sit back at home. As their routine got disturbed, so this has affected their physical and emotional conditions.

Lockdown in India

Government of India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi ordered a nationwide lockdown for 21 days on 24 March 2020 as a preventive measure against the Covid-19 pandemic in India [2]. The lockdown extended in phases .i.e., Phase 1: 25 April 2020-14 April 2020 (21 days). Phase 2: 15 April 2020-3 May 2020 (19 days). Phase 3: 3 May 2020-17 May 2020 (14 days). Phase 4: 18 May 2020-31 May 2020 (7 days) [2]. Measures taken in lockdown are-People are banned from stepping out of their homes. Only pharmacies, hospitals, banks, grocery shops, and essential services are open. All the commercial and private offices are close (only work from home). The complete shutdown of all educational institutions and all worship places. No public and private transport services. Prohibition of all social, political, sports, entertainment, academic, cultural, religious activities [2].

Lockdown and Health

As it is banned for people to step out of their houses, the people working in corporate firms, banks, educational institutes are said to work from home. Therefore people work on their laptops, computers, tabs, and phones for many hours. So all the work is done in the sitting position for hours. This means no going out, no time for exercise, and snaking a lot during the work. You can take your example, the intake of food has increased in the lockdown than it was before lockdown. So the weight gain due to irregularity of intake of food and eating junk food causes an increase in the risk of a large number of health problems, which include diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, different types of cancer.

This lockdown has also affected the mental health of the people. As their daily routine is disturbed due to this lockdown, stress can develop, they may feel depression, anxiety. Further, people who already have mental illness face problems getting their medicines, and these patients will be at high risk that their condition would get worsen if there is no regularity in their medication [3].

How the Low-Income Group is Affected by this Lockdown

An adverse effect on the health of these people is also seen. Where on one hand the privileged group of people is having more than enough food during this lockdown period, while on the other hand people who have low income are facing the problem for food. As almost all of them work on daily wages, the complete shutdown of all the sectors has caused a great economic impact on them. Due to this, it is crucial for them to arrange and make food. The lack of food leads to a lack of nutrient intake in their body which leads to malnutrition. This can lead to low immunity and they are at higher risk to get infected by the coronavirus [4].

Women Health and Lockdown

Unfortunately, this pandemic has also lead to the hormonal imbalance of the women. Especially working women. As they are working from home and has to handle both the office and the housework their sleep pattern has been disturb, lack of proper food intake. So the women are facing the problem of irregularity in their menstrual cycle and more painful menstrual cramps than usual. This lockdown has developed stress among women as their daily routine is being disturbed. Due to this the stress hormone .i.e., cortisol hormone is being released into the body of women which has a negative effect on the reproductive hormones. National Health Service (NHS) explains that human bodies aren't really accustomed to dealing with stress for a prolonged period and thus begin reacting to it. And biologically speaking, the human body doesn't care for the source of stress; its response would be the same irrespective of what's causing you to feel that way [5]. The standard menstrual cycle is of 28 days and may differ from women to women. So the stress may cause a delay in periods (menses) of no periods at all. The stress also affects women with the PCOS (Polycystic Ovary Syndrome) condition. Hence if the women have an initial stage of PCOS, the stress may adversely increase the PCOS. One of the reasons for an increase in stress that we don't know is when the lockdown or the phase of this COVID-19 would end up and when we would get back to our normal routine. Women may also go under a situation known as Oligomenorrhea, a condition in which insulin is increased in the body due to stress which leads to the secretion of leptin hormone and causes delayed menses by 7-8 days or even more. Accordingly, if the lockdown extends further the stress caused during this period may cause infertility problems too.

Lockdown and Pregnant Women

It is recommended by WHO (World Health Organization) that the pregnant women to have their first contact with the health care providers in the first 12 weeks of gestation, with subsequent contacts taking place at 20, 26, 30, 34, 36, 38 and 40 weeks gestation. Which has become difficult for the women in this lockdown period, as she thinks it would be dangerous for her child to step out of the house in such a period. Moreover, some women have iron deficiency, these women have to visit the hospital in their given period of follow-up. Their hemoglobin check is done in 1st trimester and 3rd trimester. If the women did not visit the hospital then there are chances that the women may generate anemia. Due to anemia patient may lead to anti-Partum hemorrhage and postpartum hemorrhage.

Lockdown Effects Elderly Too

As in this lockdown, it has become difficult for people to continue with their daily routine. Similarly for the elderly people lockdown has threatened them. Also, the risk of COVID-19 affecting them is high. Along with this many of elderly people live without their children and so they are facing physical and emotional problems. Many of the elderly have heart problems, mental health, and physical problems and it becomes difficult for them to deal with it alone. Because there is a restriction on going out, they may feel isolated which would then lead to depression.

Lockdown: Vacation or Punishment for Children?

Lockdown has not spared the children too. There is a great impact on their mental health as all over there is an environment of worry, anxiety, stress, depression. They got a "vacation" but cannot enjoy it with their friends or family in real sense. Their school has taken initiative for arranging online lectures for the students through various apps. So the students have to sit before the screen of the laptop, desktop, tabs or cellphones for more than 3 hours which can affect their eyes or to be more precise in their sight and may get some eye problems. Nowadays teenagers are more often engaged in cellphone gaming thus most of the time face the problem of backaches due to posture they are in when they are with the phones, even eyes become dry, along with this they may start acting aggressively with others. Because it's time for them to explore the outside world and not being lockdown in the house. This becomes a punishment for them. Devina Sengupta has mentioned in her article that "A 15-year old has been put under medication for panic attacks because family time was spent watching the news about the latest Covid-19 cases." "Children's mental health is a casualty during the lockdown" [6-8].

Conclusion

After reviewing about each category of people from our society, it seems that the lockdown had a great affect on the physical, mental and economic health of the people as it caused anxiety, depression, stress among the people in the society.

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