



PAKISTAN CORONAVIRUS CIVICACTS CAMPAIGN

April, 2022 - Bulletin no. 8



WHAT'S INSIDE

01 CORONAVIRUS MYTHBUSTERS

02 CORONAVIRUS UPDATES

03 CORONAVIRUS INSIGHTS

04 EXPERT'S INTERVIEW

With the continuous spread of COVID-19 in Pakistan; Accountability Lab is continuously building on its work with district governments and Community Front Liners (network of volunteers) through Coronavirus CivActs Campaign (CCC) to debunk rumours, fake news & misinformation related to COVID-19. The Coronavirus CivActs Campaign supported by the Open Society Foundation also conducts fact-checking, synthesizes data, pushes out the verified information through weekly bulletins and social media campaign for mass awareness, and gathers feedback on the COVID19 response in Pakistan. The bulletins are disseminated in five languages including English, Urdu, Pashto, Punjabi & Sindhi to reach far and wide to help citizens build resilience and fight against the pandemic. These bulletins are also shared with a range of stakeholders from the general public, to government departments, development agencies, CSOs and humanitarian networks via online and offline means.

The campaign also highlights important government decisions, information about vaccination drives, community feedback and concerns related to COVID-19. The objective of the campaign is to enhance awareness among the most vulnerable segments of the society including women, youth, ethnic and religious minorities, transgenders and persons with disabilities. In the current phase of the campaign, Accountability Lab has also engaged the local female community leaders and building their capacity through training and active civic engagement to countermyths and disseminate facts around COVID-19 and gender issues.

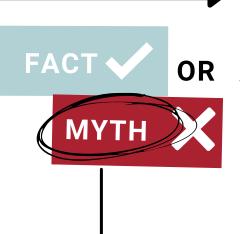
MYTHBUSTERS





Alcohol gels won't kill coronavirus





From the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, one of the primary recommendations made by the concerned authorities such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has been to wash hands with soap and water frequently to prevent the spread of germs/bacteria. However, as investigation into the coronavirus has progressed, the usefulness of alcohol gels as an anti-detergent against the bacteria has also emerged. It is now also recommended that if you are unable to get access to soap and water, an alcohol based sanitizer can do the trick. The effectiveness of alcohol gels against the virus is debatable, however, the majority consensus is that the effectiveness of alcohol gels depends upon the type of virus that is being targeted. Evidence shows that although alcohol gels are not effective against the norovirus, the coronavirus has an envelope structure which the gel can attack. Based on this evidence, it has been advised to everyone to use alcohol based sanitizers for disinfecting the surfaces inside homes to stay protected from the virus.

Source: Wired

PREVENTIVE MEASURES THAT CAN BE TAKEN AGAINST CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)



Wear a mask that has two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric and covers your mouth, nose and chin. It should not be loose on the sides.



Practice physical distancing outside your home by keeping a distance of 3 feet between you and others.



Get registered for vaccination as soon as possible and follow all pre and postvaccination guidelines.



Avoid unnecessary contact with eyes, nose and mouth as that increases chances of virus transfer.



Keep yourself and your environment clean.



If you fall sick, stay at home and contact a healthcare provider.



Avoid unnecessary outdoor socialising and spending time in crowded spaces

UPDATES



NINE STEPS TO SAFE HOME BASED RECOVERY FROM COVID-19

With the increase in the number of Covid-19 cases, the Ministry of Health of many countries has approved or recommended home-based recovery for patients suffering from mild or no symptoms. This is to ensure that the country's hospitals are available for those who need it the most.

In order to support and guide the people going through home-based recovery, WHO has compiled a list of nine steps that one can take to ensure that the experience is successful.

These steps include the following:

- Register with your local health authority as they can support your recovery. An example is of the National Institute of Health in Islamabad, Pakistan which can be contacted via its website and telephone contact numbers.
- Decide whether you want to stay at home or check in at an assigned facility. If you stay at home, you must have at least two fully vaccinated caregivers with you.
- Isolate and maintain distance within the home, such as sleeping in a separate bed.
- Ventilate rooms and common spaces inside the home
- Wear a face mask and maintain hygiene throughout the recovery period
- Monitor and treat all symptoms related to the infection
- Know the red flags and seek help early. A red flag could be really high fever or chest pain.
- Get more information and help such as using hotlines like 1166 (Pakistan).

Source: WHO

COVID-19 - THE ENDLESS SEARCH FOR THE ORIGINS OF THE VIRUS

Even though it is now the third year of the coronavirus pandemic, scientists are still struggling to confirm the origins of this novel virus.

To begin with, although the animal hosts of the coronavirus mutation that caused the 2004 and 2012 pandemics were identified in just a few months, the origins of the novel coronavirus have remained much more elusive.

To combat this, many international conferences have been held but to no avail. Last September, a task force set up by Lancet Covid-19 Commission to find out the source of the virus was disbanded after 14 months due to conflicts of interest. Similarly, a probe by WHO was abandoned due to controversies with China.

Due to this, we only have a few conjectures about where this virus could have come from. The first hypothesis is that the pandemic had a natural zoonotic pathway, moving from bats to an animal host to humans. The second hypothesis is that it originated from a laboratory leak in China.

These conjectures have led to questions like why the virus came to infect our population, how it mutated into a pandemic, and what its future will look like. Based on which origin of the virus is chosen, there is a different story about its potential development. However, although the source of the virus is yet to be confirmed, there is complete consensus over the need to prepare for the future risks brought about by it among our population.

Source: Aljazeera

INSIGHTS

CIVIC ACTION TEAMS

This week, we interviewed Catrina Khan, President of Rehabilitation-Education-Skills-Development (RESD) - Trainings for Transgenders' welfare organization to learn how the Covid-19 pandemic in Pakistan is leaving transgender community behind.

Rehabilitatiion-Education-Skills-Developemnt (RESD)

- Trainings for Transgenders' welfare organization works for the best of the transgender community. It is one of the pioneer organizations which started working for transgender rights, to solve their problems and provide them with awareness around prevention from the virus.



You can read the interview below:

Even before the pandemic, the transgender community in Pakistan were seen as outcasts and faced discrimination on a regular basis, but the pandemic has escalated this even more. Can you please share some of the experiences of transgender community before and after the pandemic?

As a marginalized community, we were already facing so many issues but after the arrival of COVID-19 our issues got more prominent.



Because of the lockdown every function and gathering got banned and we were bound just around our "Deras". The 1st and 2nd wave of COVID-19 was very strong so we had to take safety measures for ourselves to protect our community. The Government didn't provide any awareness facility about COVID-19 to our community. We learned more about the virus and necessary needs to be taken to avoid it through different social media sites and transferred the knowledge to our community as well.

Was there vaccine hesitancy observed in the transgender community? If so, what was the reason?

The transgender community was reluctant to get their COVID-19 vaccination done because of different rumors that were spreading, such as that the recipients of the COVID-19 vaccine would die within two years after taking the vaccine. Understanding the importance of vaccines and the repercussions in vaccine delay, along with my organization, I took the initiative to create awareness among the TG community to counter such conspiracies being spread about COVID vaccines, acquire their identity cards and group together to attain the COVID-19 vaccine.





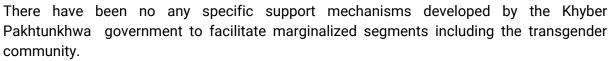


What were some of the health care challenges for transgender individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic?

There were a lot of challenges. Before the availability of vaccines, members of our community were not allowed within the hospitals. Members of our community who had contracted the virus were returned back on the basis that they couldn't be treated in the female or male wards. No attention was even given to transgenders who were in severe conditions from COVID-19 contraction. We basically then had to care for our members ourselves keeping in view the SOPs for COVID-19.

Another challenge that came to surface when the vaccination process began was the absence of identity cards. Since they were required in order to avail the vaccine, a vast number of the TG community were left out from being vaccinated. For those who were having the cards, they faced another set of challenges by the support staff at the vaccination centers that the facility only had spaces for male and female genders.

Have there have been any specific support mechanisms developed by the KP government to facilitate marginalized segments including transgender?





They did not provide any support nor came to visit our dera's when we were in most need. Only we were the ones who supported our community. Yes, the private sector contacted me and gave me sessions regarding covid-19. After learning from them I transferred that knowledge to my community.

Do you have any suggestions for the government to improve the support mechanism for transgender community during such emergencies?

Speaking as a member of the transgender community, we want the government as well as the private sector to please keep the transgender community a part of any response/ implementation plan during such pandemics, natural distaters or future emergencies. We always remain neglected and absent from any such support or any such guidance that the government provides to its citizens. I would like to mention her that in regards to a a mini survey conducted in KP to identify the number of transgenders living in order to provide relief to the transgender community suffering silently due to lockdown, ration packages were distributed among the community members with the help of government and read foundation funds. We got to know that there are more than 20,000 transgenders living in KPK. And these are those identified having ID cards, many more remain and were neglected from the aid. They have always been suffereing in such situations. The government should come forward and help the transgender community in getting the members registered so remaining members can obtain the support and get their vaccination process completed as soon as possible.

In addition, the government can support in and help us get vaccinated in a smooth manner by establishing separate vaccination center for the transgender community, develop and aloocate a separate cash support program just like those for the underpriviliged communities to our members can fulfil their basic needs during such difficult situations, and open up towards inclusive healthcare services which can benefit not only transgender communities but all members of the society.

Do you want to share any message or advice with your own community members for fighting covid in a better way?

I want to request from my community to please carefully listen and act upon SOPs that the government shares, because it's for our own benefit. So please accept it and get your vaccines as early as you can. Please remember to keep distance, wear masks, keep your surroundings clean and love your life because you only live once.

Where can I get tested?

Islamabad	National Institute of Health Park Road, Chak Shahzad, Islamabad
Karachi	Agha Khan University Hospital, Stadium Road, Karachi, Sindh
Hyderabad	Liaquat University of Medical and Health Sciences (LUMHS), Liberty Market Roundabout, Liaquat University Hospital, Hyderabad
Khairpur	Gambat Institute of Medical Sciences, Gambat, Khairpur, Sindh
Peshawar	Hayatabad Medical Complex Phase-4 Phase 4 Hayatabad, Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
Mardan	Chughtai Lab Mardan point, near Allied Bank, Shamsi Road, Mardan, KP
Haripur	Excel Labs, TMA Plaza Shop No. 6, Near Girls Degree College Circular Road Haripur, KP
Lahore	Shaukat Khanum Memorial Hospital, 7A Block R-3 M.A. Johar Town, Lahore, Punjab
Multan	Nishtar Hospital Nishtar Road, Justice Hamid Colony, Multan
Rawalpindi	Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, Range Road, CMH Complex, Rawalpindi, Punjab
Quetta	Fatima Jinnah Hospital Bahadurabad, Wahdat Colony, Quetta
Muzaffarabad	Abbas Institute of Medical Sciences (AIMS), Ambore, Muzaffarabad, Azad Kashmir
Gilgit	District Headquarters Hospital, Hospital Road, Gilgit, GB
For more cities visit the COVID-19 Health Advisory Platform	



