

Covid-19: Suspect and Stigma

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Received: April 15, 2020; **Published:** April 29, 2020

Why do people hide their Travel History? Why do they run from Isolation/quarantine Centres? There might be many questions like these in our minds and a lot of anger for those people who are turning out positive. No doubt everyone feels that these guys are acting so careless and really don't care for the welfare of the society. They are putting everyone's life on risk. Indirectly, in order to minimize the spread of deadly fast growing communicable disease, stigmatization does have a role in history but not to the extent that we develop strong negative feelings towards a person that is happening with Covid-19 suspects also relating to their status in the society.

But have we ever questioned ourselves... if I would have been a covid-19 positive case. How would I have reacted?

Most of the people will say... they would act like a responsible person which is a total lie. Truth is, I may also behave like these people who are hiding travel histories and running from Isolation facilities. Now the question is why?

It's because the stigma and myths associated with the Covid-19 have overpowered the contagious power of the Corona virus itself. We have been reading these from social and electronic media past few months. The stigma and myths have instilled the practice of fear and avoidance in almost everyone because of the contagious nature and lack of vaccine for Covid-19. The impact of social stigma is as far worse than the clinical manifestations despite it being curable in almost 97% patients affected.

People with the disease and their family members are treated and looked upon as if they have committed a heronious crime. People have been instilled with such a fear that if they contract the disease they will be kept in isolation away from their families, their families will never see them again, they will not live a normal life again, even to such an extent that if they die, they will die a cruel death and their family members even can't perform their last rites as per the religious belief.

Other issues mentioned below also influence the mentality of such patients. When kept in isolation, they fear that they will not be allowed to see their loved ones for long, no family member will be there to take their care, they will not get the food and facilities matching their standards, and they don't want to spend time in an environment totally unfamiliar to them. Some might have a bad past experience from a hospital which can influence their mind. Somewhere, in anyone of corners of their heart, they have that awkward sense of feeling growing slowing and slowly. How the society is going to behave with them soon after they will be tagged as "Suspect" and isolated from rest of the world. Till Yesterday I was also in a race to shame the suspects but today I am myself a suspect. How is this cruel world going to crack jokes of me and my family on every news channels and news paper? How everyone on the face book will share my information and will abuse me and my family for putting their lives on risk? How people will discuss my personal life? How people will make jokes and memes out of my miseries and disease? How people will give judgements and sue me and my family in their personal courts of law? How I will be the most discussed topic at every nook and corners of the town? How by just stepping forward like a responsible person, exposing my travel history, submitting my health issues to health authorities will make me the biggest sinner of the society... Will I come forward?

We as a society have gone to such an extent that we may totally boycott Covid-19 survivors. Today the numbers of Covid-19 patients in our Jammu and Kashmir are less than 11, that's why we easily discriminate but Allah forbid when the numbers will increase and will reach to an epidemic level! Will we as a society still behave same with Covid-19 victims?

We as responsible citizens have to start Covid-19 Mission campaigns to end these misconceptions and work to educate people about Covid-19, its causes and how it is transmitted on the same social and electronic media who stigmatized this disease in its initial phase. We want people with the disease to be identified so they can be treated and limit the damage, as well as control contagion. We may require support groups and help from psychiatrists and psychologists in future to treat them from the trauma they suffered from the journey Covid-19 took them along.

Volume 4 Issue 5 May 2020

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