

# Public Health Principles Application Failure during Covid-19 Pandemic: Lessons Learned and Way Forward

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The covid-19 pandemic is a challenge never faced by humanity in living memory. It has not only adversely impacted the health of communities, but it has also disrupted the social, personal, financial, and family life of people across the world. Covid 19 pandemic has presented itself as a challenge for the health system in general, and public health in particular.

Public health principles promote and protect the health of people and the communities where they live, learn, work and play. It prevents people from getting sick or injured; promotes wellness by encouraging healthy behaviors; helps conduct scientific research and provides science-based solutions to problems and educates communities about health. Its practice provides conditions in which people can be healthy for example vaccinate to prevent the spread of disease; educating people about the risks; set safety standards to protect worker's health and track disease outbreaks, prevent injuries, and shed light on why some of us are more likely to suffer from poor health than others. It advocates for laws that promote healthy behavior.<sup>1</sup>

Scientific information and advice are provided by subject experts and acted upon by key decision-makers in government to serve the public interest. Covid Pandemic could have been handled better if the science-policy interface had worked efficiently between academicians and policymakers.<sup>2</sup>

Community involvement, engagement, and empowerment were lacking while dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. Community leaders were not taken into confidence and resource mobilization at the community level was found lacking. Enforcement of standard operating procedures (SOPs) with regards to Covid 19 control was found lacking at the individual as well as community level.<sup>3</sup>

Enforcement of SOPs with regards to Covid-19 control helps prevent Covid-19 infection. The fact that several spikes of Covid-19 infections have been witnessed across countries, shows a lack of SOPs enforcement.<sup>4</sup> Vaccination against Covid-19 not only reduces chances of infection but also reduces its severity. Misinformation about Covid-19 infection prevented people from getting vaccinated.<sup>5</sup>

The promotion of wellness by encouraging healthy behaviors is another important public health practice principle. Wearing masks, maintaining social distancing, hand hygiene, avoiding gathering slows

down transmission of Covid-19 infection and part of SOPs. SOPs involving healthy behavior were not adequately enforced and shows the failure of public health practice. Healthy behavior and practice can be implemented by educating people and making them realize its need and benefits. Strict enforcement of SOPs through policy and regulation was found lacking.<sup>5</sup>

Robust scientific research has been ongoing with regards to Covid-19 infection, yet its benefits have not been passed on to people and communities. Doubts have been raised about the safety and efficacy of vaccines against Covid-19 vaccines despite the availability of short-term data. People were not adequately educated about the rarity of covid-19 vaccination adverse effects. False information was propagated through social media and was not adequately scientifically challenged.<sup>6</sup>

It is the pivotal role of Public Health Practitioners to educate the common public about Covid-19 infection, its prevention, and management. A lot of misinformation about Covid-19 infection is prevalent because masses have not been educated about the condition. A well-informed person is more likely to follow Covid-19 prevention SOPs including get vaccinated and seek early proper treatment if required. Health-seeking behavior is positively influenced if a person is well informed.<sup>7</sup>

Public Health Practitioners generate/ put together scientific knowledge to ensure a safe environment for the prevention of Covid-19 infection. Avoiding gathering, social distances, disinfection of surfaces is part of SOPs that slow down the spread of Covid-19 infection. Failure to adequately control the Covid-19 Pandemic is partly because a safe environment for prevention has been lacking. Safety of workplace and working from home have value in preventing Covid-19 infection but have not been fully enforced resulting in infection spikes.<sup>8</sup>

Evidence is available that contact tracing and early detection of Covid- 19 exposure and infection help control the spread of infection. Countries that have practiced contact tracing of Covid-19 exposed persons have resulted in slowing its spread. Despite available evidence and examples that prove its value, Covid-19 contact tracing has not been fully practiced resulting in its spread.<sup>9</sup>

Identifying vulnerable groups and enforcement of

special measures to prevent Covid-19 infection and its complications among them need to be adequately practiced.<sup>10</sup>

Once an informed person embarks on healthy behavior, like following SOPs for Covid-19 infection prevention, its enforcement by law and regulation becomes necessary for its full practice in a given community. Once scientific evidence is available, it's up to policymakers to devise laws and regulations for enforcement. Lack of enforcement of Covid-19 prevention SOPs has partly been due to lack of enforcement under the law. Public Health Practitioners/ Primary Health Care providers need to be an advocate for laws that promote healthy behavior.<sup>4</sup>

We have learned from our mistakes by not implementing public health practice principles to combat Covid 19 pandemic challenges. Public Health should be an integral part of Primary Health Care and Health systems to deal with Health challenges including the Covid-19 Pandemic. Public Health Practitioners develop scientifically sound evidence that helps prevent disease progression like in Covid-19 Pandemic. They help educate communities about outbreaks and how to prevent, early detect and manage the disease. They help policymakers develop and implement guidelines, policies, and regulations to control outbreaks. They help develop and implement contact tracing, screening, early detection, and referral for management in outbreaks. Community involvement, engagement, empowerment can be enforced through Public Health Practitioners and plays a crucial role in pandemic control. They integrate with the rest of the tiers of the Health System to help implement a coherent plan to control outbreaks.

Prevention, screening, early detection, and management of diseases are mandatory to control Pandemics. Public Health Practitioners play a pivotal role in controlling Pandemics. It has been the failure of implementation of Public Health practice that is largely responsible for failure to control the Covid-19 Pandemic. It is strongly recommended that Public Health practice principles be implemented to control the Covid-19 pandemic.

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