

Minutes of the 4th Expert Committee Meeting for anticipated 3rd wave of COVID Pandemic held on 02.7.2021 from 3pm onwards in the Conference hall, next to Office of the Dean, Goa Medical College

The 4th Expert Committee (EC) Meeting was held on 02.07.2021, to deliberate and decide upon the Agenda matters shown below. At the outset, the Chairman Dr Bandekar welcomed all EC Members. The Minutes of 3rd EC Meeting which were duly circulated previously to all EC Members were passed and adopted. The Chairman requested Member Secretary to proceed with the Agenda for the Meeting. 14 Members attended; Dr. Gauns & Dr. Buvaji were granted leave of absence. After detail deliberations and discussions with all the Members, the following decisions were taken unanimously:

1. **Matters arising from 3rd EC Meeting:** Member Secretary informed that the suggestion of the IAP & IMA for video calling each patient under home monitoring is not practically possible for the IVRS/Step 1. Members pointed out that *video calling would be by patients to the monitoring Doctors and that too only in selected cases* and not in all instances.

Member Secretary also informed the EC about samples being sent by the IDSP DHS for *Genomic surveillance to NCCS Pune as well as CDFD Hyderabad. Delta variant strains were most commonly reported among samples tested during 2nd wave by the NCCS, few tested positive for Kappa variants; however no case of Delta Plus was reported till date.* Dean informed that Genomic Sequencing Laboratory would be established soon at GMC under Department of Microbiology. Dr. Virendra Gaonkar informed that some years ago, after lowering Infant Mortality rate to less than 10/1,000 live births, State of Goa was awarded a Grant Prize of Rs.200 crores for setting up such a Genomic Sequencing Lab; however the Lab was never established; the prize money remained unutilized; hence the matter maybe looked up.

2. **The EC took stock of the progress on ATRs** by each concerned EC Department/Medical Associations. *Dr Maria (HoD Pediatrics GMC), Dr Ira (SGDH) & Dr Chetna (NGDH)* were requested to email scanned copies of **functional Progress Reports** on their respective ATRs duly signed with stamp/seal on Official Letterheads before next EC meeting on 6th July 2021, as the same are necessary to submit before the Hon. High Court. *SEPIO DHS* had submitted Progress Report on expanding the COVID vaccinations to all eligible persons 18 years and above. *IAP EC Members* were requested to submit updated List of their Members willing to undergo/have undergone Training in Neonatal/Pediatric Ventilation, willing to do Tele-consultation / Home Monitoring and Progress in conduct of Training Programs. *IMA Goa State Branch* was requested to submit similar lists of their Members willing to undergo Training in Ventilator support/ICU care and management of moderate/severe COVID, list of


those willing to come on board at Government COVID Hospitals for patient care/provide such care in Private Hospitals & do Tele-consultation

3. The EC was informed by the Chairman as well as Member Secretary that **subsequent to the above Hon. High Court Order, the onus of giving appropriate expert medical guidance in various matters of all COVID management, incl. Pediatric COVID, now rests upon the EC.** Hence each Member was requested to study all the relevant matters seriously in order to assess, deliberate and decide upon various directions contained in the Oral Order of the Hon. Court dated 28.6.2021. Copy of Order was duly circulated by Member Secretary to each Member well before the 4th EC Meeting. Member Secretary, Chairman and Hon. Secretary Health had also carefully studied the Order of the Hon. Court.
4. **The EC decided upon following vaccination recommendations (Action by: SEPIO, DHS):**
 - (i) ***House-to-house vaccinations for bedridden:*** majority of the EC Members supported the proposal to recommend such house-to-house vaccinations of bedridden persons and those who are genuinely physically unable to report to vaccination centres as per feasibility, provided there were no documented listed contra-indications and in accordance with MoHFW Guidelines. However, AEFI observation must be done for a minimum of 30 minutes post-vaccination and routine post-vaccination AEFI monitoring should be performed as per set norms. Government may like to decide on involvement of BLOs & Health Officers to ensure logistics & avoid vaccine wastage.
 - (ii) ***EC recommended to permit inbound travellers from other States/UTs of India holding authentic Final COVID vaccination certificate (2 doses completed, before their arrival in Goa) without insisting on their COVID testing Report,*** keeping into consideration ICMR Advisory dated 4th May 2021, which stated that “the need for RT PCR test in healthy individuals undertaking inter-domestic travel maybe completely removed to reduce the load on laboratories.” In case of travellers not holding such Final vaccination certificate, EC recommended they should undergo any of the ICMR approved tests for COVID (RAT / RT PCR / TrueNat/CBNAAT). However, EC felt that unless there is any such change by the ICMR/MoHFW, the prevailing ICMR SoP for foreign travellers must be strictly implemented. However, the EC recommended that in any case, ***it must be ensured by the State authorities that all travellers strictly follow COVID appropriate behaviour.***
 - (iii) ***Vaccination of pregnant mothers:*** considering the reported deaths among pregnant mothers in Goa who developed COVID, the mounting evidence of COVID becoming one of the leading causes of maternal mortality, and considering the recommendations of International FIGO, National FOGSI / IAP as well as the ICMR, safety of vaccines & lack of teratogenicity reported among women who received vaccines while being unknowingly pregnant, the EC unanimously strongly recommended that State of Goa should communicate to the MoHFW that vaccination maybe offered to pregnant mothers, after 12 weeks of gestation, safely during the 2nd & 3rd trimester, with due counselling and upon their consent.

- (iv) **Vaccination of foreigners**, Goan Sea-farers, etc: EC strongly felt that vaccination is among Fundamental Right to Health and **all persons 18 years and above must be offered COVID vaccines**, including foreigners, Goan Sea-farers holding Foreign Passports, etc and nobody who is eligible should be denied vaccination.
5. **The EC also deliberated & decided upon following matters enlisted by the Hon. Court:**
- (i) EC recommended to the State Task Force to **add following Experts in the EC**: Dr. Vaishali Joshi (Associate Professor Pediatrics), Dr. P V Rataboli (Professor HoD Pharmacology), Dr. Viraj Khandeparkar (Associate Professor Medicine), Dr. Sunil Vidhyasgar (Professor HoD Cardiac Anaesthesia) and Dr. Pravin Bhat (Sr Consultant Pulmonary Medicine) (Action by: Public Health Department)
- (ii) EC recommended that Hospital I/C GMC should **procure and maintain adequate stocks of all essential drugs for COVID & Mucormycosis management, including IVIG for children with severe COVID (MIS-C)** (Action by: I/C Hospital Pharmacy)
- (iii) Regarding **under-reporting / failure to report COVID deaths some Private Hospitals/Nursing Homes**: DHS was requested to apprise in next EC meeting the action taken by Competent Authorities of the respective jurisdiction under the existing provisions of the Public Health Act. Such Hospitals should be informed that henceforth no such delays in notification of deaths shall be condoned, failing which Government would be constrained to take appropriate action. (Action by: DHS)
- (iv) EC unanimously decided to recommend to the State Task Force that in larger public interest, **all University/School Faculty/Teachers, school staff, Anganwadi Workers & their supervisory staff of ICDS Scheme, PTA members, Mahila Swasth Sangh, security, home nurses, baby sitters, caretakers/caregivers, drivers & conductors of Balrath/Public transport/private vehicles transporting children, all drivers, conductors, cleaners & staff of inter-state transport, street vendors, homeless persons and all public/private sector/NGO establishments where staff come in contact with under 18 children, should be vaccinated** before they commence their work, **to safeguard under 18 children from contracting COVID**, unless they have documented listed contra-indications against COVID vaccination.
- (v) **Unlocking of curfew/lockdown and their re-imposition**: EC unanimously decided that only once the positivity rate remains below 5% for atleast 1 week, curfew maybe gradually lifted **while enforcing strict COVID appropriate behaviour and containment measures in case of focal outbreaks**. However, as and when the positivity rate rises or the incidence of new cases again steeply rises beyond permissible limits, it would necessitate that State Government must consider imposition of curfew/lockdown as per the prevailing SoPs of the MoHFW.

Presently, as 60-70% population is vaccinated by atleast 1 dose, State Government may consider gradual opening up of the economy by easing curfew restrictions, while ensuring that the momentum of high vaccinations coverage is continued, as a balance needs to be struck between lives and livelihoods.

6. The EC Members were apprised by the Member Secretary on the Revised User Instruction Document on **“Orientation on entry forms for Pediatric cases, Urban/Rural Classification, Mortality Analysis & Pediatric Projection Tools** dated 1st July 2021 by the MoHFW. (Copy of the Document duly circulated). The DHS was requested to ensure that the relevant data is uploaded on the COWIN Portal. Dr. Utkarsh assured that he would send the fresh formats for reporting to all the Government & Private Hospitals at the earliest.
7. While upholding the previously accepted DteGHS Guidelines of COVID management in Children, **the EC unanimously decided to recommend that the Latest Revised MoHFW Guidelines for Management of COVID-19 in Adults** as well as **Latest Revised MoHFW Guidelines for the Management of Mucormycosis in the State of Goa.** (Action to be taken by Nodal Officers Dr. Viraj Khandeparkar and Dr. Carnegie DSa at GMC)
8. **A.O.B** (with prior permission of the Chair):
 - a. Dr. Jagadish suggested that the EC may develop and issue simple **health education messages to Parents** regarding prevention of COVID & management of mild COVID in children under home isolation.
 - b. Dr. Dhanesh appreciated the **high vaccination coverage** in Goa and suggested that this high momentum should be maintained. EC accepted his suggestion of COVISHIELD vaccine 2nd dose to be allowed 8 weeks after 1st dose.
 - c. Dean informed the EC that an **ECMO machine** is being procured & installed shortly at GMC that would make a significant difference to severe COVID cases.
 - d. EC strongly recommended **that all crowded socio-cultural & religious gatherings** e.g. Sarvajanic Ganeshotsav/Saptah, Feasts/Festivals, Weddings/Public rallies/meetings, Exhibitions/Fairs, **should be restricted and held on limited scale. Public must be informed to strictly ensure COVID appropriate behaviour** till COVID pandemic ends and **State Government to ensure strict implementation of the SoPs for such gatherings while ensuring regular testing, isolation/quarantine & containment measures.**


Dr. Jagadish A. Cacodcar

Member Secretary &

Professor
Dept. of Preventive & Social Medicine,
Goa Medical College,
Bambolim-Goa.

To,

All Members of the Expert Committee

C.c. to:

1. Dean, GMC
2. Director, DHS, Goa
3. OSD to Hon. Chief Minister, Govt of Goa
4. PA to Hon. Health Minister, Govt of Goa
5. Hon. Secretary (Health), PHD, Govt of Goa
6. Under Secretary (Health), Gautami Parmekar