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Vaccination for disabled in India & abroad - Universal vaccination a fantasy?

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With the global introduction of COVID-19 immunizations, there have been significant concerns raised about how individuals with disabilities will be ready to retrieve the vaccines. The disability movement has genuine concerns about prioritising vaccinations for individuals with disabilities and their support networks, as well as the accessibility of vaccination protocols, relevant information, and venues, and vaccines provided with everyone's explicit consent.

It was after the second wave of Covid 19, and the vaccination drive that followed it, that the different disability rights groups and activists have started demanding that there should be the removal of any sort of age bar for the people with disabilities should be lifted. The disability right groups and activists laid down a list of problems and solutions for the same. Their primary motive was to remove any age bar, they also made the point that all the people with severe disabilities should be the initial ones to get vaccinated with the old age group people and also at least two caregivers of people with severe disabilities should be provided in the vaccination with the disabled person so that it does not transmit them in any way. They made a valid point by saying that covid will be affecting all the disabled people to the same extent as it is affecting the old people. Therefore, it should be made a point to not leave younger people with disabilities out of the first lot of people to get vaccinated. Citizens over 60 and those over 45 with comorbidities will be covered in this round, according to the Ministry of Health. According to the Ministry's list of categories, people with disabilities like, intellectual disabilities, acid attack victims with involvement of the respiratory system, people with disabilities having high support needs or with multiple disabilities including deaf-blindness is one of the 20 comorbidities that will be given priority.

Also, there was inclusion of some of the disabilities in the second vaccination drive, The Disability Rights Alliance (DRAs) have appreciated this action taken by the associated ministry of the central government, but they also that this is not enough and there is a need to include all disabilities in the action. There should be an easy way to make the priority list of people being vaccinated. The

sequence of people being vaccinated should be according to the level of affect they can have if they catch the virus and who is at a higher risk to catch it faster than other people in the society.

Furthermore, the issue of vaccination centre accessibility continues to be a source of worry. In addition to the planned geotagging of Covid vaccination centres, the government should perhaps disclose ramp availability and other accessibility information, including hospital waiting spaces. Alternatively, there should be provisions for immunizations at home.

According to doctors specialising in disabled people and different disabilities rights activists and medical practitioners, the disabled are at a high-risk around the world, and efforts should be made in India to provide them with priority access and vaccine equity, which are both violated in the Health Ministry's comorbidity circular.

Also, there is a focus on only a particular number of disabilities and only they are given the advantages which should not be the case. All the disabilities mentioned in the list should be taken into consideration.

There should be certain steps which should be taken in the different parts of the world on an urgent basis to solve the problem of vaccination for the disabled strata of the society, as they deserve the special care and it should be provided to them. There are multiple steps that can be taken. For instance, there should be a cut in cost of the vaccination and they should be made easily available to these people. This will lessen their struggle to complete the first step of the vaccination process which is to find the vaccine. The vaccination slot which is being available online should make it a point to give the disabled people a special priority and that they should be kept first on the list to be provided with the slots. For the people who have difficulty in walking or coming out of their house or building should be given the vaccine inside their respective places, so that they are not left behind just because of that particular reason. Persons with disabilities and their International representative organisations must be included actively in making different strategies and planning for the dissemination of COVID-19 vaccines and related activities by international organisations and governments. People with disabilities organisations must be adequately resourced towards becoming partners in the implementation of information campaigns, for example, by reaching out to the most marginalised people and ensuring that their messages are coherent, comprehensive, and inclusive. People with disabilities and their chosen support

networks, such as personal assistants, family members who take their care, and those who work in disability-related services, should be given priority access to these immunizations.

Public writs have been signed by different people to raise this concern, whether the disabled people should be given the priority. They have been multiple movements that have occurred. I do believe that the older people are at a higher risk of getting the coronavirus but it is high time that we understand that these disabled people are at an equally high risk of contracting coronavirus. We should make sure as is mentioned in our constitution as a right to equality should be provided to every citizen and this is a case of the same. People with the same needs should be treated with the same course of action. Several High courts like the Madras high court and several others are trying to take an action and see as to what they can do on this matter of great importance.

Now when we see all this and there are various other genuine problems there is this question which arises or should arise in the minds of the people all over the world that – Is Universal Vaccination possible or will it just be a dream of many?

Various methods like imposing lockdown, making quarantine necessary have been taken by different governments of the countries to stop this virus from spreading. But these are only temporary solutions; to halt the pandemic, the majority of the world's population must be vaccinated. A vaccinated person functions as a barrier, slowing the virus's spread and preventing it from spreading further. There are numerous impediments to vaccination, including systemic, psychological, ideological, and governmental barriers. Behavioural barriers such as complacency, lack of trust, and lack of understanding, according to the study, are just as relevant as systemic hurdles such as supply chain concerns. COVID-19 immunizations have sparked a flurry of conspiracy ideas.

There are certain barriers and problems which can stop this dream from becoming a reality. The primary barrier is the vaccine is being purchased the developed rich countries which is failing the basic motive of the vaccine. This is also known as Vaccine nationalism. The wealthier countries all over the world have played their tactics like purchasing the vaccines in advance or paying extra amount of money so that these vaccines are provided to them in great quantity and before the other countries, so that their country become safe earlier as compared to other countries mainly the developing ones which will not be able to compete.

The next problem or barrier of the task of universal vaccination is shortage so supply of the vaccine. To boost the global supply of COVAX vaccines, countries must work together to overcome the legal and technological constraints that are blocking more widespread vaccine manufacture.

Another problem is that there are a great number of trade barriers which are there and it makes it very difficult to trade the vaccines. These trade berries should be lifted at least on the medical based equipment's and medicines in general. Because of the new wave of Covid-19 in the country, the world's largest vaccine production, the vaccine's availability for worldwide vaccination has been harmed even more. The country has placed a ban on the export of vaccines manufactured within its borders. Vaccine manufacturers in the country are putting a premium on meeting local demand.

The spread of rumours and the decline or lack of belief in people for the vaccine (especially in our country) is also a great problem. This is a psychological problem and people have made this mental blockage in their mind that the vaccine is not helpful or moreover that it has certain side effects which can prove to be harmful for them.

We won't be able to defeat this fatal pandemic until the vast majority of the world's population is vaccinated. To reach this purpose, all international health-related facilities must ensure that ongoing activities are done to solve the situation at hand, volunteers selected by the respective governments should be sent to remote areas in the world to tell the importance of the vaccine and tell the people to get vaccinated as soon as possible by telling its importance. Also, the international organisations should start acting as a coordinator among the many countries throughout the world to ensure a fruitful and beneficial outcome.