

# POST COVID-19 EMERGENCE 2020

## RETHINKING HEALTHCARE Conference Session Report



# DHAKA FORUM



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PANEL SESSION



**“ RETHINKING HEALTH-CARE ”**

As the present world continues to struggle to add new dimensions to the overall Healthcare system ever since the coronavirus has put us in a situation never faced before, this has definitely served as a wake up call to future-proof healthcare systems for a post-COVID world. The panel session was hosted to discuss the existing gaps and collectively find ways to redesign the health care system to fundamentally equip us to handle future pandemics and to have better research platforms in the health care sector and how collectively and inclusively we can build global health resilience.

**Panelist- Dr. Murad Hasan, MP**  
**State Minister of Information, Bangladesh**



Referring to the havoc played by coronavirus not just in the developing countries but also even in the developed countries, he said “Every nation now needs to rethink their health sector. It is time to allocate more budget for the medical and health sector.”

Dr. Hasan further talked about taking the healthcare support online overnight due to the outbreak, “In my country, in the last 3 months, over 8000 local covid and non-covid patients and civilians have been receiving medical attention by my 200 doctors at my telemedicine centre, named as ‘Amar Doctor’. We have been able to provide such services using the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), Telecommunication Ministry and ICT Ministry, Health Ministry and of course my Information Ministry all are working together in responding to this pandemic. Citing extensive health infrastructure installed across the country, he discussed those are not performing as effectively as the Covid-19 situation is totally unprecedented and clearly unprepared for.

**Panelist- Dr Umar Ebrahimsa**  
**Infectious Diseases Specialist, NHS London (UK)**



Dr. Umar Ebrahimsa, in his panel session, discussed how the state can provide healthcare to all and enable the institutions to do so at the same time. The pandemic itself has exposed and exacerbated vulnerabilities and inequalities within and among countries. He believes the Covid-19 pandemic has confirmed that systems are not only increasingly interdependent but increasingly fragile and that it will be the guiding light that will lead us to re-examine long-standing assumptions and reconsider the approaches that we have taken to the basic problems that we face.

“The issue is not one simply of public versus private, it is one of how well-funded our healthcare system is, it is one of how well supported it is and it is how effective our public health networks are whether first of all we can identify problems on the ground and whether we have the means of resolving them subsequently.”

Dr. Umar emphasized on the need for higher and focused budgets in preparation for such global pandemics. “Over the last 7 years, Public Health in the UK has lost 40% of its budget, a lot of its laboratory capacity including loss of specialized staff and physical facilities that has been a major cause for failing to ramp up the rate of testing here unlike say the South Korean states.” He mentioned the need for balance in investing and devoting resources in technological responses and advancements and other social transformations and sectors and raised important questions in the system: “ The Covid-19 disease prevention requires people to wash their hands frequently but yet in the world today 750 million people have no access to clean water. How are they supposed to wash their hands with that?”

He further described ways to reimagine and reform the healthcare systems that are just beyond the medical facilities.



**Panelist- Dr. Rajen. M**  
**Founder & CEO, Holista Colltech Ltd**

Dr Rajen M brought the need for alternative medication in terms of natural medicine and strengthening the immune system and the significant role this can play in fighting and recovering from a pandemic.

“This pandemic has made people rethink about what I call the ‘2H’, first ‘H’ is health specifically immunity & the other ‘H’ is the hygiene aspect of it. As an effective vaccine is yet to be made, now we need to focus on boosting the immune system with compounds based on foods, plants and others. Natural medicine has abundant resources and it's entirely sustainable and fully scalable to meet a response & give immunity to a pandemic like this one. We have approaches from botanical base plants such as turmeric, neem, mushroom, ashwagandha or ginseng which boost the immunity system.” Dr. Rajen further discussed some of his projects that he is currently working on including launching a nasal balm to prevent airborne viruses, natural sanitizers and water soluble vitamin D to boost immunity in an affordable and accessible way.



**Panelist- Dr Mushtaq Mahmood**  
**Associate professor, Case Western Reserve University Hospitals, OH. USA**

Dr Mahmood laid emphasis on the adaptability to cope with the COVID-19 situation. "Unlike animals, humans can adapt with situations, for example people learned to have pasteurised raw milk that contains different types of bacteria. Mankind needs to ensure that the bad part of nature cannot dominate them."

He suggested behavioural changes and bringing changes in personal life, workplace and thought process of the government can in fact play a bigger and more important role in tackling pandemics like this and mentions that, "In the past couple of decades, there had been some other epidemics that taught us to emphasise some no medical approaches also. This Covid-19 has indeed proved that point strongly with the example of no effective vaccines." He further added that a pandemic as such does not disappear overnight, it is quite clear that it is here to stay and hence we must not forget the other majority of the population, not Covid-19 infected, with medical requirements.

**Moderator- Arnav Kapur**

**Lead - Philanthropic Partnerships, India and South Asia at Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**



Highlighting the ways of how the present world can inclusively build performance oriented healthcare systems Arnav Kapur explored how Covid-19 has outlined the importance integrating other sectors like education, technology and social and development sector with the healthcare sector.

He focused on the role of behavioural changes and the use of nudge theory as response to this pandemic.

“None of us alone can address the gaps and reimagine the healthcare system. We have to make sure governments, private sector, research bodies, various philanthropic platforms join hands in rebuilding and actually building performance oriented equitable healthcare systems. At Gates foundation, we are known to be impatient optimists and we believe it is possible to together ensure quality healthcare is affordable, available and accessible to all.”



## SUPPLEMENTS

(Source: CITY A.M.)

### **W**ANT A CURE FOR COVID RIGHT NOW? STOP SMOKING, EXERCISE MORE, AND FOCUS ON HOLISTIC HEALTH

So much of the conversation around how to beat Covid-19 has focused on the Holy Grail of a vaccine.

This is obviously of utmost importance. But to beat coronavirus, as well as prepare for the next pandemic, we need a new definition of health — one that can strengthen our natural immunity and save thousands of lives.

Despite lockdowns, social distancing, face masks and drug treatments, more than 600,000 people have died worldwide from Covid-19. Many of those lives could have been saved if those individuals had been supported in building their bodies' natural resilience, rather than conditioned to lead unhealthy lives and then wait for the doctor to prescribe a treatment once the damage is done.

In the western world in particular, health equals pills, injections, and doctors. But healthy eating, exercise, and family and social support are just as critical to health — and they're issues that should be communicated to the world population by doctors, not Instagram influencers.

Campaigns like the UK government's new obesity strategy are too little, too late. The World Health Organization should be as keen to get people into gyms as vaccination centers.

If it were, this pandemic would be far less deadly. One study from April showed that 90 per cent of coronavirus victims had underlying conditions, such as heart and respiratory disease. Stopping smoking and starting exercising may be the "COVID cure" available to all, right now.

In England, over 30 per cent of the total hospital deaths have occurred in patients who had type II diabetes, a disease associated with poor diet, obesity, and inactivity. Diabetes sufferers are on average 12 times more likely to die from Covid-19 once they become infected.

An estimated 1.7 billion people suffer from conditions that predispose them to suffer more acutely from Covid-19. That's almost a quarter of the global population who could be made less vulnerable to the disease's effects through simple holistic health policies.

Unhealthy trends have been worsened during lockdowns. Some 60 per cent of Brits said that they were exercising less, and shutdowns around the world have had a detrimental impact on childhood obesity.

Exercise and weight loss is one obvious way to build “immunity” against COVID’s worst symptoms. Another is to strengthen our immune systems through a variety of healthy nutrients, enough sleep, and drinking and smoking less.

Stress reduction is also an important factor. More stress means a weaker immune system. The constant stream of worst-case scenario projections and daily death tolls (the likes of which are not run by news channels even at times of war), as well as lockdown isolation and depression, must have come at a huge immune cost.

There has, sadly, been very little focus on these crucial risk areas, or on ways to reduce the risk of Covid-19 that don’t rely on a vaccine. The global attitude to health is failing us all by divorcing lifestyle and other health factors from the medical system. The system is built on cures (and the pharmaceutical companies that provide them) rather than prevention.

There’s both more money and more political support for selling drug treatments than gym memberships. In a truly health-conscious society, both would be seen as essential public goods. The NHS advises people to visit gyms but won’t pay for gym membership (although it will now prescribe a limited number of bikes). It does however, spend billions on the problems caused by lack of exercise.

Holistic health is true health — if only health authorities realized it. The term has unfortunate connotations, because of some who piggyback off it in order to sell ineffective or fraudulent products on social media. But it is a scientific approach taking a fuller picture of a patient’s health — including physical wellbeing, mental health, and lifestyle factors. It means not siloing the body into convenient categories, as our medical system often does, but caring for patients in the round.

Some developing countries with more early-stage health infrastructures seem to be embracing the holistic approach more than wealthier nations. Next month at the Dhaka Forum I will be speaking about this approach alongside representatives of the UN, the Gates Foundation, former Downing Street advisers and ministers. I am not aware of anything comparable in London or Washington. This is a missed opportunity.

Healthy people are usually healthy not because they take the most medicines, but because they make lifestyle choices that reduce their risk of needing medicines in the first place. The race for a vaccine is important — but so is the race from couch to 5k, or from the confectionary aisle to the sugar-free one.

Article by Dr. Rajen. Manicka  
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