

COVID-19 IN INDIA AND CMAI RESPONSE

The COVID-19 scenario in India:



Figure 1: data as on March 18, 2020:

The worst affected state is Maharashtra with 39 cases followed by Kerala where 25 cases were diagnosed. The first and second confirmatory tests are free for all Indians. India currently has 52 testing centers. The government is optimistic that this is enough as this capacity has only been 10% utilized. Experts believe that the testing protocol has created insufficient testing of only 3-4 persons per million giving rise to some complacency in putting together surge capacity.

Advisories have been issued by various ministries of health to prevent spread through social distancing. Schools, Colleges, Offices, and public spaces have been closed.

The government has also created a clinical protocol for hospitals to follow.

The reality on the field and advice on safety measures.

1. Put up notice boards in Hindi/local language - all patients with fever and recent-onset respiratory symptoms visit triaging station
2. Set up 2 triaging stations - one in general Out-patient Department and another in Antenatal Care
3. Triage station to be manned by a health assistant or nurse aid
4. A quick questionnaire-based assessment and risk felt, provide a regular medical mask for them in the waiting area and as they enter OPD counters
5. Provide self-protection and prevention information materials to all patients from OPD counters



Photo 1: A busy OPD at Duncan Hospital in Raxaul (Bihar) with 400 plus patients including patients from across international border from Nepal.

Comprehensive CMAI response to Coronavirus Pandemic

A. CMAI and Advice to the Church – a combination of technical and faith based action to the COVID 19 pandemic

Area of concern	CMAI advice to NCCI
1. Conducting services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry advices that the Sunday Services can be regulate and Members maintain 1 metre distance according to point 8 in the following link: https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/SocialDistancingAdvisorybyMOHFW.pdf • CMAI advices that the church services be cancelled till March 31st 2020 or till further notice. The elderly are most at risk. Travel to the church also increases the risk. Suspend all other non-Sunday meetings for worship. If the State and Central government brings out clear directives then it is our duty to listen and abide by the law. Public Holy Communion service may be avoided since it attracts many people. On very special request, Holy Communion may be shared at home. • Why is this necessary? - The Coronavirus spreads very easily and is also very easily caught through respiratory secretions and infected surfaces/articles. To contain the spread it is important to practise social distancing. If not there will be a tremendous exponential increase in the infected persons. We cannot allow this to happen in a country such as ours. It is our responsibility to our healthcare professionals. Please find attached a letter from the World Council Churches
2. Availability of the church for those in need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider keeping the church open as a place for prayer and contact for important services. Those that can be postponed, please do so. • Ensure appropriate signage to remind people of the need to keep at least 1-2 metres apart. • If unwell, please do not come to the church under any circumstance. Those having any other conditions, please ensure that the medication is continued to lower your risk. • Keep water and soap outside to wash before entering the church. • Display posters of hand-washing, cough etiquette, avoid touching others and your own face.
3. Womens' Group 4. Mens' Group 5. Youth group 6. Sunday School 7. Senior Citizens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore other means of sharing ministry including live streaming. • Have innovative interactions and sessions on skype calls/group calls and encourage each other. • Have correct information to give each other without creating false fears. • Have sessions on cooking healthy foods. Take vitamins, drink plenty of water. Have positive messages and conversations. • Call the Senior citizens and inquire about their health. Call those who are sick and those who need an encouraging word. • Call and pray for those who are still working to help others like defence personnel, healthcare workers, delivery boys, store attendants, garbage pickers and so many other service providers

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain good hygiene practises all the time, which will effectively disrupt the spread of the virus. • Encourage social distancing. • Telephone prayers maybe offered to those who desire. <p>Please find below a link from the Church of England with some very good guidelines which we too have referred to: https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches Message from the Archbishop of the Catholic Church in Mumbai https://youtu.be/D9dpst5M2Ug</p>
8. What do pastors advice anxious members of the congregation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastors and church leaders need to encourage and speak positive messages. Please be available for counselling and prayer for those in need. • Encourage members to make their homes places of worship and give them scripture to meditate on. List out hymns which will uplift and encourage. • Encourage social distancing and read the directives of the state and the centre while advising others. Take printouts and keep it so that we give advice as responsible citizens. • Please find again the same links with comprehensive guidelines. https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/SocialDistancingAdvisorybyMOHFW.pdf https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches

B. Creating Awareness through Webinars

Target Audience	About the Webinar
1. Member Hospitals 2. Healthcare professionals	<p>Understanding SARS-CoV-2 and Steps towards preparedness for Mission Hospitals. - Dr Priscilla Rupali, Professor Infectious Diseases Department, Christian Medical College Vellore</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the Hospital -How to be prepared for diagnosis, testing, containment, isolation, protection, treatment and further prevention. Knowledge on Govt protocols. • For the individual –Personal Protection and prevention protocols. Importance of creating awareness and educating all their patients. Knowledge on Govt protocols. <p>18th March 2020, 2-3pm IST</p>
3. Hospital community, Church Community and Church Leadership	<p>The COVID 19 Pandemic - Dr. Jayaprakash Muliylil, Epidemiologist, Former Professor and Head, Department of Community Health and Ex Principal Christian Medical College, Vellore</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic understanding of the virus, its spread and prevention. • Basic understanding of a pandemic and its stages and therefore precautionary preventive measures.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What to do and what not to do 19th March 2020, 2-3 pm IST
<p>Please note that both the webinars will be available to view on our website www.cmai.org under REPORTS</p>	

C. Partnering with the healthcare network of CMAI partners

Along with the Catholic Health Association of India, Billion lives, Vidal Health– CMAI will support a platform www.coronacare.life as a collaborating partner.

About www.coronacare.life – It is a platform that is operational for few weeks now and it addresses two requirements: a) counselling for people under stress due to corona fear. b) Arranging telemedicine consulting for health professionals from small hospitals with virologists, pulmonologists and microbiologists. BillionLives has offered the technology platform at no cost to willing mental health and medical professionals to use and there are over 30 professionals who can speak various Indian languages and foreign languages like Italian, French , Spanish ,German, Cantonese , Mandarin, Filipino, Bahasa etc providing their service on www.coronacare.life

CMAI’s role as a collaborating partner on this platform will be:

- 1) to provide information on our member hospitals that are able and willing to provide support to the government and their local community. This information will be collected through a Google form sent to all our institutions and the information will be shared on to the coronacare.life platform. CMAI will try our level best to support these services of our hospitals.
- 2) to give a list of specialists willing to give their time to address calls from the public and healthcare professional community. For this we will take the help of the **church and network** to enlist experts and counsellors who will be willing to give their time on a telephone consultation to a fellow healthcare worker or to an anxious person from the community at large.
- 3) to be a part of a common procurement platform to get the essential Personal Protective Equipment at reasonable rates and in adequate supply.

Please remember to keep each other in prayer and trust that the good Lord will protect and provide for all of us.

Dr Priya John
General Secretary
Christian Medical Association of India