

ABSTRACT

INDIAN LAWS TO ASSIST THE NEED FOR NEW TOOLS DURING RISK AND OUTBREAK COMMUNICATION: NOW AND POST PANDEMIC COVID -19

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In 2003 SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) started spreading from China from the Guangdong province of South-Eastern China and that was also from an uncertain animal reservoir and WHO declared a Global Health Emergency due to loss of life in 22 Countries registering more than 10, 000 deaths Globally. On April 24 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that a previously undetected Swine origin influenza Virus (Swine Flu) was causing outbreaks of disease among humans in Mexico and the United States. By the end of August 2010, when the WHO declared the pandemic over, the new virus had spread to more than 214 countries and territories and caused at least 18,449 laboratory confirmed deaths. Given that many Countries did not have the capacity for laboratory confirmation of deaths or even cases, the number of deaths Worldwide is estimated to be significantly higher. In the United States alone, one study has estimated over 12,400 deaths from the new Virus.

The influenza pandemic during 2003 and 2009 in India revealed shortcomings in the existing guidelines for risk and outbreak Communication. Concepts such as building trust proved hard to achieve in practice, whereas other issues such as communicating through the internet and coping with the political fallout of disease outbreaks are not dealt with in existing guidelines. This article makes efforts to identify the current guidelines and makes recommendations for additional tools and guidelines to be developed in four areas: Integrating long-term behaviour, Change Models with outbreak communications; Scientific approach to develop a better understanding of Communicating through the Internet; Research to understand how to use communications to build trust; and developing guidelines and principles to understand the political nature of disease outbreaks.

Keywords: Pandemic Disease, Pandemic Risk Communication, Outbreak Communication, Health Communication and Law in India.

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