

Response of the Ayurvedic Healthcare Sector to COVID–19: Insights From India

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The WHO, in collaboration with national and international health authorities, set the standard for preparing global healthcare systems facing the pandemic which claimed more lives than any other single disease during the corona pandemic. The preparedness and management of the pandemic, being the subject of national priority, witnessed concrete measures taken by the Indian Government to fight the pandemic with executive support of the Ministry of Health and other nationwide Health Services. Ayurveda, an Indian indigenous holistic healthcare approach, was widely adopted at large. Ayurvedic medicine producing companies saw exponential growth in their revenue during the period of pandemic. This chapter aims at exploring responses of certain constituents of the Ayurvedic treatment system in India—the leading Ayurvedic companies and AYUSH department—to the coronavirus pandemic. The Ayurvedic companies and the AYUSH department responded to the pandemic in a varied way including product diversification, digital marketing, and promotion of yogic exercises and herbal remedies.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 situation, accompanied by societal, public health & economic disruptions, was most likely to escalate the conflict (Kumar & Malhotra, 2021). As the number of COVID-19 patients grew exponentially, several nations healthcare systems came to a virtual standstill. The elderly, immunocompromised, those with other comorbidities were more likely to develop the severe acute respiratory syndrome, which had a high fatality rate, despite the fact that most infected persons have a mild to moderate clinical course (Kumar & Gupta, 2021). In order to prevent, contain, and manage the COVID-19 pandemic, governments and the medical community have been forced to make difficult decisions balancing the general good with individual liberties, and the necessity to restrict the spread of the disease against the economic losses makes it difficult to make decisions about treatment. Poor health systems, inadequate government capacity to respond to public health crises, and limited water and associated infrastructure all contributed to Covid-19's vulnerable status. The corona pandemic became a calamity for all businesses, especially those run by women, who lost a great deal of money despite their willingness to use information technology and their desire to take advantage of the pandemic catastrophe (Kovid et al., 2021).

The Indian healthcare system faced several issues as a result of Covid-19. For the first 21 days, the world's longest lockdown was put in place in India, which was later extended to a total of 55 days. Lockdowns to enforce compliance with social and physical distance have resulted in massive economic losses and social, behavioural effects that might unravel in the near future (Bhardwaj & Kumar, 2022). This epidemic might be too big for India's under-resourced healthcare system, which is plagued by constant staffing shortages and equipment shortages. The Indian scenario needed better preventive, early control, and less resource-intensive management (Shaikh, 2020).

For high-risk people, such as asymptomatic frontline health professionals and asymptomatic home contacts of laboratory-confirmed patients, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) advised the usage of Hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) (MOHFW, 2020). Covid-19's present treatment includes solely symptomatic treatment, supportive care, and avoidance of complications; however, no particular medicine or focused intervention is available yet. As of September 30, 2020, there are 3489 clinical trials listed on the National Institutes of Health Clinical Trials website. The repurposed experimental medications being tried include Hydroxychloroquine, Lopinavir/ Ritonavir, Remdesivir, experimental vaccination, convalescent plasma, altered cells, and occasionally high dosage steroids. All of these medications, save Hydroxychloroquine & steroids, are expensive or need complex manufacturing techniques, and all of them might result in major side effects. The best and most

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