

TIFR initiative to spread awareness on Covid-19

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Breakout of Covid-19 in Wuhan, China has now engulfed whole of the globe. Declared a pandemic by World Health Organisation, the latest count is it has spread to 204 countries. With the pandemic comes the stigma, superstitions and fear about the disease among people. One important challenge is how to make sense of extreme measures such as isolation, quarantine and lock-down. Why must we practice physical distancing? To dispel the myths and provide a basic scientific understanding of the public health measure behind the pandemic Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) come out with a package of engaging and illuminating communication materials. Researchers have created a set of multi-lingual resources (youtube videos) in explaining why social distancing is helpful for tackling viral outbreaks like COVID-19. The resources are based on the original simulations published by Harry Stevens in the Washington Post.

“We have launched in nine languages English, Hindi, Bengali, Konkani, Marathi, Malayalam, Odia, Tamil and Telugu through volunteering efforts by faculties, families and students” Prof Arnab Bhattacharya, Scientist, TIFR. Soon the resource material would be released in Gujarati, Punjabi, Haryanvi and Assamese as well.

The idea is to help disseminate information and debunk various myths that are going around. The information has been provided in easy to understand format and in regional language so that it can reach to wider audiences. “The disease was emerged in abroad, but we have to explain about it to our population according to local needs, for which this vernacular content is important. We hope that the use of this material can prove effective in spreading awareness among the people,” said Dr Bhattacharya.

In the next step the team is trying to make masks by some home picked material. For this posters and videos would be released soon. The public outreach initiative by TIFR, titled ‘Chai and Why?’ a platform where scientists interact with the people through social media to debunk misinformation and explain the science behind the virus.

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