

“Covid-19 in Children: Threats & Precautions”

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CSIR's new entity, the CSIR-National Institute of Science communication and Policy Research (NIScPR)), New Delhi, organized a half-day online session on COVID-19 in children yesterday (04 June 2021). The session was focused on the recent second wave outbreak and the impact of COVID-19 on children, threats and necessary protocols required for the safety of children. The Chief Guest of the webinar was Dr. V. Vijayalakshmi; Additional Commissioner (Academics), KVS (HQ), New Delhi and the Guest speaker was Prof. Dr. R. Somasekar, Professor of Pediatrics, Sree Balaji Medical College & Hospital (SBMCH), Chennai, Tamil Nadu and Executive Board Member 2021, Indian Academy of Paediatrics (IAP). The program was attended by about 150 delegates including several dignitaries, faculty members, researchers and scientists, and students from various schools through the link made available on Face Book by CSIR-NIScPR.

Dr. Ranjana Aggarwal, Director CSIR-NIScPR, in her introductory remarks highlighted the incredible bonding between two great institutions, the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) and the institute with Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) in the form of JIGYASA, a student-scientist connect initiative kick-started in mid-2017, with the purpose of inculcating 'Scientific Temper' among school students and make them science oriented". Further, she added that the 'JIGYASA' has indeed created a commendable impact not only among the students, but also enthusiasm among the scientists as well. She said 'JIGYASA' provides opportunity for students to interact with the scientists directly and thereby motivates the young minds for innovative thinking and approach. In the long run, it is expected to deliver impressive results, especially in terms of S&T developments beneficial to the society.

Dr. V. Vijayalakshmi, Additional Commissioner (Academics), KVS, in her address, stated that the JIGYASA is like a dream coming true for the students as it provides a platform to interact with the scientists and also witness their work closely. This association has been quite successful for their institution as the students are excited about the various types of engagements that it ensures all through the year. Dr Vijayalakshmi said that the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic has affected every sphere of our lives, most importantly social life, and passively affected the children's psyche denying them their right to play, be it with their peers, apart from their studies. She recollected how our teachers became IT-savvy technocrats overnight to cope up with pressure of educating the children.

Prof. R. Somasekar, the Professor of Pediatrics from SBMCH, Chennai and EB Member, IAP, delivered a comprehensive keynote address "Covid-19 in Children: Threats & Precautions" covering minute details on the subject. He said Covid-19 in children is still moderate. Though children are vulnerable to the SARS-CoV-2 virus, still the majority of them are asymptomatic and only 1-2% had to go for hospitalization. Dr Somasekar cautioned the parents about the chances of transmission of infection from adults, and the increasing gastrointestinal symptoms among children these days. He explained how to identify and differentiate the covid-19 symptoms from other flu and common cold. Dr. Somasekar said that the covid-19 has so far not affected children much in India but for the state Karnataka, and discussed various Covid-19 treatment options for children. Taking the session forward he suggested some measures to adopt in our day-to-day life: physical exercise, playing with

kids, avoiding junk food, good sleep, wearing masks, balanced diet, and age-appropriate vaccination. Most importantly, he advised a close watch for symptoms and change in kid's behaviour.

Dr. Y. Madhavi, Senior Principal Scientist, CSIR-NIScPR, moderated the discussion and summed up the concluding session. Shri R.S Jayasomu, Chief-Scientist, CSIR-NIScPR, proposed the vote of thanks. Dr. NK Prasanna, Scientist, CSIR-NIScPR played a vital role in organizing the event successfully. The entire staff of CSIR-NIScPR played an active role in the outreach of the programme.

SS/RP/ (CSIR-NIScPR)

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