



COVID-19: Vijnana Bharati suggests government to ramp up purchase of life-saving medicines, to conduct a feasibility study for increasing the gap between Covaxin doses

New Delhi

Given the severity of the second wave of COVID-19 that has caused nearly a lakh plus casualty in India and the war footing with which the Centre and state governments, the medical fraternity, and the people at large have responded to contain the emergency, **Vijnana Bharati welcomes the government's decision to increase the interval to 12 weeks from existing six to eight weeks between the first and second doses of Covishield vaccine. It urges the authorities to undertake a similar study for the 'Covaxin' vaccine too.**

In light of the recent scarcity of life-saving drugs to treat critical cases of coronavirus infection and to meet the massive increase in demand, Vijnana Bharati has also urged the government to consider buying the production of essential drugs in bulk from manufacturers.

COVID-19 is of recent origin, and our knowledge about this virus is also evolving with time. Naturally, various protocols in the case of prophylaxis, treatment including vaccination, and post COVID-19 care are bound to be refined and revised based on our evolving knowledge of the disease and its treatment.

Vijnana Bharati calls upon the authorities and the public at large to consider the following suggestions in our fight towards COVID-19.

1. Higher efficacy was observed with an increased interval of 12 weeks between the first and the second dose of Covishield in India at 81.3%. Accordingly, the COVID Working Group of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization (NTAGI) and subsequently the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration on COVID-19 (NEGVAC) recommended a revision in the interval of administration of the second dose of Covishield Vaccine to 12-16 weeks instead of the earlier 6-8 weeks on 12 May. Vijnana Bharati welcomes the decision by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to accept this recommendation. Considering the need to provide vaccine protection to the largest number of people as fast as possible and achieve maximum immunity, this decision is most timely and appropriate. **Vijnana Bharati also requests the authorities to undertake similar studies for Covaxin too.**

2. Availability of life-saving drugs for critical cases of COVID-19 is of immediate concern. We have been able to increase production significantly. However, to meet the massive increase in the requirement, to hedge the uncertainty in the quantum of requirement, and to incentivize enhanced production, **we request the Government of India to consider buying the production of essential drugs in bulk from the manufacturers. It will also ensure assured consumption for the manufacturers.**

3. **The regulatory framework in the case of many of these drugs, some of which are very recent, needs to be relooked to achieve maximum possible shelf-life without compromising any drug safety parameter.**

4. The guidelines for many of the Regulatory Bodies were developed in the context of normal times. **Vijnana Bharati requests the Government of India to empower these Regulatory Bodies through objective and necessary modifications in the relevant guidelines.**

5. Technologies for liquefaction, transportation, and repressurizing O₂ to the grassroots levels (i.e., PHCs) should be evaluated, and generalized as much as possible since transportation and storage of O₂ is a more limiting factor in last-mile delivery today than O₂ production.

6. Real-time accuracy in the data will form the basis of our response to COVID-19 in the coming days. Given the skepticism raised from many quarters, we need to emphasize the accuracy of all the data concerning COVID-19. It will be the most vital aspect in our efforts to initially flatten the COVID-19 curve and eventually bring it to a minimum.

7. **Vijnana Bharati compliments the Ministry of Ayush for bringing out protocols backed by clinical trials in prophylaxis as well as in the treatment of mild and moderate cases.** The polyherbal formulation Ayush 64 repurposed for COVID-19 is also a significant development. Throughout the duration of this crisis, Ayurvedic practices, preparations, and medicines have helped our people in fighting this virus. **As of today, the subgroup of the population that is younger than 18 years of age does not have a tested vaccine against COVID. We need to undertake a campaign of Ayurvedic practices among this group and reach out to every child to insulate them from the infection as far as possible and treat them whenever necessary.**

8. Yoga is a proven practice to enhance immunity and has been widely followed across the globe during the COVID-19 pandemic. We should emphasize the benefits of Yoga practices and encourage efficacy against the virus.

9. The enormous stress being handled by our paramedic staff calls for urgent attention. Increasing the availability of paramedic personnel on similar lines like the medical staff is necessary. E-consultations have been quite effective in many cases, and such facilities may be enhanced and encouraged.

10. The use of the technology in the management of COVID-19, including the COWIN portal and app, has been quite significant. This can be expanded in the future to encompass medical facilities to ensure optimum utilization.

11. Considering the need to insulate the pharma industry from disruption at this critical juncture, people associated with COVID-19 research as well as production may be vaccinated on a priority basis.

12. We have many vaccine production facilities presently undertaking the production of different types of vaccines. Some of these facilities may be diverted to enhance COVID-19 vaccine production. **Vijnana Bharati welcomes the efforts in this direction and the offer to share the licensing rights of Covaxin. Vijnana Bharati further requests the Government of India to immediately operationalize as many facilities as possible, both public and private, on a mission mode and enhance our vaccine production.**

Our Centre and state governments, frontline health workers, security agencies and police forces, voluntary organizations, industry, media, and the public at large have risen to the occasion in response to the advancing pandemic. Our S & T establishment has shown exemplary ability in developing a range of solutions to address the crisis.

Vijnana Bharati also shares the pain of the families who lost their dear ones in the pandemic. Many people have passed through immense ordeals in fighting COVID-19. We call upon society as a whole to stand by those who have suffered in this hour of national crisis.

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