

Dr. Arvind Kumar from the Lung Care Foundation discusses COVID-19 and air pollution



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Our partner in India - the Lung Care Foundation through our joint Doctors for Clean Air initiative - has been out front in the national media highlighting the added vulnerability of air pollution impacted communities to COVID-19. They have quickly mobilized their expertise and resources, and used their strong foundation on public engagement, to share the implications of the coronavirus especially for individuals living in highly polluted communities.

Background

In 2018 Lung Care Foundation (LCF), in partnership with Health Care Without Harm, launched Doctors for Clean Air (DFCA) in India: a collective of over 40 doctors (Pulmonologists, Surgeons, Pediatricians, Cardiologist, Radiologists, etc.) representing every state of the country to pledge to be Clean Air Champions. This collective of doctors and their state chapters work to support, empower, and educate communities around air pollution and its ill-effects on human health.

Doctors and healthcare professionals have seen the impacts of air pollution on human health, and who better to spread awareness and educate communities about the alarming health impacts of air pollution on community health and well-being?

Lung Care Foundation was founded by [Dr. Arvind Kumar](#) (Chairman of the Centre for Chest Surgery & Chest Onco-Surgery and Director of the Institute of Robotic Surgery, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, New Delhi, India), Mr. Rajiv Khurana, Mr. Abhishek Kumar, and Dr. Belal Bin Asaf.

Air pollution, COVID-19 and Doctors for Clean Air

Now with the COVID-19 pandemic, DFCA is using their expertise and platform to warn and educate people living in regions with higher levels of air pollution, about its potential linkages to increased coronavirus vulnerability.

Dr. Arvind Kumar has been outspoken about the need to face COVID-19 head on, to follow the safety measures (quarantine, physical distancing, etc.), and to understand the potential severity of this threat to India. He was quoted

recently saying, “Social distancing and lockdowns are the only answer to contain the virus. A country like India cannot cope with the virus if it spreads to the community.” This was timely given that soon after, India’s Prime Minister announced a 21 day lockdown of the country as a preventative measure.

News and media channels have been turning to Dr. Kumar for advice, and to learn more about the status and implications of the coronavirus in India.

Coverage - Dr. Kumar and DFCA’s coronavirus awareness work

The Hindu

“Exposure to air pollution in long term reduces the capacity of organs to function fully and makes it more vulnerable to infections and diseases. In the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic, such individuals are likely to face severe complications”, said the DFCA.

The collective has Arvind Kumar, director, Institute of Robotic Surgery, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital; Raja Dhar, director, Pulmonology, Fortis Hospital; and Sundeep Salvi, director, Chest Research Foundation, among others.

The DFCA has asked people, especially those who live in polluted urban centers and those who have pre-existing conditions of lung or heart diseases, to take extra precautions of maintaining hygiene, social distancing and immediately seeking medical help in case they show symptoms of cold, fever and breathlessness.

Call to government

It has urged the government to formulate long-term plans to reduce air pollution in the country. It has sought stricter enforcements of thermal power plant emission norms, regulation of emissions from diesel and petrol vehicles and strict enforcement of construction and solid waste norms so that the sources of air pollution can be tackled.

“The only way for India to fight COVID-19 or future pandemics would be if its environment is protected. This pandemic has made us realise the value of clean air and this should be a key lesson for going forward in building resilience in our country”, the DFCA noted.

[Dr. Arvind Kumar's interview with one of India's leading news channels - NDTV](#)



Dr. Kumar: "The real numbers are many, many, many times more and there is infection which is simmering in the community, and it is there waiting to explode any day."

[Times Now interview with Dr. Kumar featured in the Economic Times](#)



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