

Book Review

Unlocking COVID-19 and Mental Health

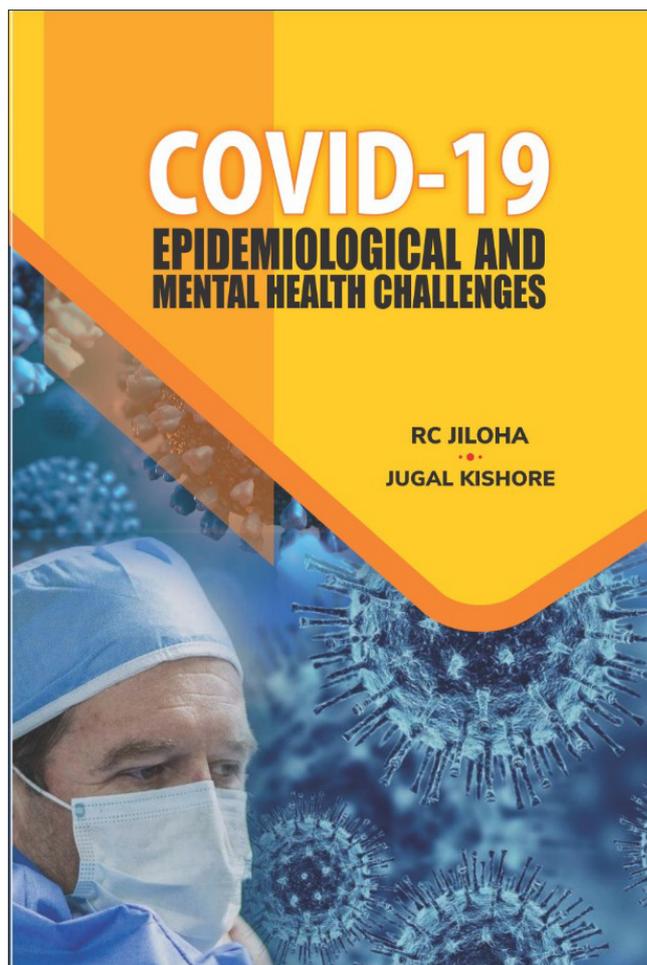
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More than a year has passed since an unknown virus, SARS-COV-2 marked its presence in India. This pandemic has infected millions of people, killed millions of them, and brought the world to stand still. The pandemic has left no life untouched from its impacts. The economies have crashed, healthcare systems are disrupted, people are deprived of their workplace and separated from loved ones with the lockdown, which was necessary to decrease the speed of infection. With the roll-out of the vaccine, people started taking a sigh of relief when a stronger second wave has hit the country. The outbreak as well as its response has taken a significant toll on the mental health of people. There is a feeling of fear constantly hovering the people about the life of loved ones, concerns about food and essential supply, the unending search for hospital beds and oxygen supply. COVID-19 epidemiological and mental health challenges present the comprehensive and authoritative compilation of scientific information about the pandemic and its mental health effects and the way forward for dealing with it.

The book is authored by Dr. R. C. Jiloha, Visiting professor of Psychiatry AIIMS, Rishikesh, Formerly Director Professor and Head Psychiatry, Maulana Azad Medical College, GB Pant Hospital and Jamia Hamdard New Delhi and Dr. Jugal Kishore, Director Professor and Head Department of Community Medicine Vardhman Mahavir Medical College and Safdarjung Hospital and eminent public health expert. The book is written at the time of infodemic on COVID-19 pandemic with main objective to provide relevant and veracious information about epidemiology of COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on mental health. to formulate mental health response and tries to explore modalities to strengthen the response in current outbreak and develop a resource to establish and organize the mental health response in people affected by pandemic outbreaks.

The book starts by introducing the readers to the information pertaining to the pandemic, how it spreads, its effect on health care systems and the brief account of pandemics through the human history. Then it covers the technical and scientific details of the viruses with specific focus on coronavirus, its transmission and phylogenetic analysis. The clinical aspects of COVID-19 inclusive of its epidemiology, clinical features and management strategies is well recorded. It went on to elucidate the preventive



About Book

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strategies defining the role of vaccination, public health surveillance, quarantine, social distancing and isolation. It further captures how the pandemic has marked its impact on different dimensions of health. The brunt of pandemic on mental health and public health interventions to deal with it are deciphered. The association of culture, mental health covid 19 is addressed and policies and practices are recommended for the mental health response. At last author portrays the probable future of the pandemic, the ways in which it can come to halt. The book has emphasized the need for introspection, assessment of the condition in more comprehensive manner and development of planning and implementation to halt the small microbes which can bring the world to its knees.

The strength of the book lies in being exhaustive but engaging, which is an arduous task, when compiling information meant for diverse audiences from laymen to scientists and policy experts. This book is remarkably authored to captivate laymen while not holding off a specialist of espied attrition. It can serve as a laudable and accessible repository of information on COVID-19 and mental health challenges brought with it. The author needs to be felicitated for comprehensive narration of mental health issues of the pandemic and advocacy for incorporation of mental health response in the pandemic management which is highly neglected.

It presents an eloquent account of pandemic and mental health. The unique feature of this book is that it has touched upon different mental health issues and their prevention separately. Many suggestions to strengthen the policy response in mental health aspects have been discussed. The discussion of how pandemic appeared in historical human settlements is a useful addition in early chapters. The important lessons can be derived from these to design the future response. The analysis of pandemic response is however, lacking. Even though it was not the aim of book, but important lesson was missed out about how the different responses to pandemic can affect the course of disease. The author could have given the technically more detailed and unique ideas to embed the mental health response in country's pandemic response. The stronger advocacy to involve public health experts to drive the pandemic response, leveraging their knowledge of health care system in devising the strategy to fight the pandemic would have been the useful addition to the book.

Overall, the book is significant resource to gain knowledge on epidemiological and mental health aspects of COVID-19 pandemic. This book can serve as important tool to guide the policy makers in incorporating the steps to improve mental health in current pandemic response. The book will be important guide to researchers in understanding mental healthcare during and after the pandemic. This book

envisages to provide much needed impetus to improve public health even after the pandemic is over.