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Combating Covid19 pandemic with effective surveillance: experience from Tamilnadu

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ABSTRACT

Covid-19 being a new disease, limited information was available on modes of transmission, incubation period, spectrum of clinical illness and period of communicability. Hence, surveillance plays a major role in monitoring disease trends, rapidly detecting new cases, providing epidemiological information and to conduct risk assessments at various levels to guide preparedness and response. This study was done to analyse the surveillance measures taken by Tamilnadu state government to detect disease trend for initiating the control measures in order to handle the pandemic situation. Tamilnadu intensified its surveillance measures after reporting of its first case on March 7, 2020 and declared COVID-19 a notifiable disease under integrated disease surveillance programme (IDSP). The state government employed various surveillance methods in order to monitor the spread and intensity of COVID-19 disease. The surveillance data was analysed in terms of time, person and place to estimate the magnitude of the problem, also in-depth analyses on age, sex-gender, comorbidities, were also analysed to measure the disease trend and to assess the effectiveness of the control measures initiated. Though Tamilnadu has an established public health cadre, Covid-19 surveillance is challenging because mild and subclinical cases were not seeking health services. For flattening the epicurve, the focus of the surveillance system should be to find every case and isolate. Strengthening the existing surveillance system, addressing vulnerable population, expanding the source of reporting and increasing the testing capabilities are essential to enhance surveillance.

Key word: Covid-19, Pandemic, Surveillance, Tamilnadu