

Universal Health Organisation (UHO)

Weekly Newsletter – 16 Jun 2023



The weekly newsletters bring the updates on the science, battered and bruised during the pandemic, legal updates and impact of activism for a just society, across the world. These are small steps to promote Transparency, Empowerment and Accountability – the ethos of the UHO.

“One World, One Health,” says the Honourable Health Minister, Mr Mansukh Mandaviya

Mr Mansukh Mandaviya, on 09 June 2023, [tweeted](#) an article titled, "One World, One Health," the catchphrase circulating currently across the globe. We should be wary of slogans. They are double-edged swords. Rightly used they can be powerful tools for bringing about favourable change in society. Wrongly used, slogans can turn into signs of authoritarianism. Slogans may over-simplify complex issues, promote groupthink and discourage critical thinking. They can degenerate into tools of propaganda and mass hypnosis.

The slogan, “One World, One Health” implying one size fits all, breaches all epidemiological principles. It will put the poor countries at a disadvantage. Its paternalistic approach, bordering on authoritarianism with loss of autonomy of nations and human rights violations of citizens is not compatible with a vibrant democracy like India. Digital health, digital identity and use of technology for intrusive monitoring of common citizens on the pretext of health are reminiscent of George Orwell’s satiric novel, 1984.

The honourable health minister explains at length India’s “transformative digital tools” during the Covid pandemic which generated digital certificates as proof of vaccination. Does this not contradict the government’s affidavit in the Supreme Court stating that the vaccination for Covid was completely [voluntary](#)? Why the need for digital certificates as proof of vaccination if it was voluntary?

The writing on the wall is ominous. The WHO and the European Union (EU) are contemplating [Digital Vaccine Passports](#). The Covid-19 vaccine fiasco has not dampened their zeal it seems. According to the WHO this will be scaled up to a Global Digital Health Certificate. With the proposed Pandemic Treaty, the introduction of Digital Vaccine Passports, and Global Digital Health Certificates, the ambition of the WHO to take on the role of an extra-constitutional seat of power is becoming evident to all. Perhaps our honourable health minister parroting the “digital vocabulary” with its motley of jargons promoted by the WHO and EU, is missing this point.

Concerns on CoWin digital platform data leak

The Covid-19 vaccines were not the only thing which was leaky. There are [reports](#) that there has been data leak from the CoWin digital portal which was set up to coordinate the Covid-19 mass vaccination drive, one of the examples of the “digital transformation” the honourable health minister is proud of. The leak of private data of Covid-19 vaccinated people of different age groups and demographics registered on the digital CoWin portal may offer the perfect opportunity for cybercrime such as identity thefts, phishing attacks, scams and extortions according to [experts](#).

Given this double whammy of leaky vaccines and leaky digital platforms one should be wary in echoing the WHO and EU’s call for Digital Vaccine Passports and Global Digital Health Certificates.

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Union Health Secretary calls for preparation for the next pandemic with a sense of urgency

Meanwhile, playing into the WHO's game plan for a Pandemic Treaty which will make the unelected and unrepresentative WHO an extra-constitutional seat of power, the Union Health Secretary Mr Rajesh Bhushan, jumped the gun in raising an alert with a sense of [urgency](#) for an impending pandemic. The WHO representative Dr Ryan, also seconded him and praised India's capacity for manufacturing drugs and its innovations in digital health arena. The tell-tale signs from these developments are clear – there is unlikely to be any pushback to the proposed pandemic treaty from the largest democracy in the world. All its key policy makers seem to be dancing to the WHO's tune. A [critique](#) brings out how the health secretary is barking up the wrong tree. Or is he just listening to his master's voice?

“100m+ Indians now diabetic, up 44% in 4 years: ICMR Study”

This is a recent [headline](#) in The Times of India. The research which was published in The Lancet brought out that while 11.4% of India's population is diabetic, a larger proportion, 15.3% is pre-diabetic. India has now more than 101 million people living with diabetes, compared to 70 million in 2019. Part of the increase may be due to better awareness among the people leading to increased detection. Another factor may be better care and longevity of diabetics who pass on the genotype to their progenies increasing the diabetogenic gene pool. Having said this, there are short term and long term challenges given the complex epidemiology of diabetes in our country.

Barker, a British epidemiologist, put forth that inadequate nutrition *in utero* [programs](#) the foetus to have metabolic characteristics that can lead to future disease. He argued that individuals starved *in utero* are more likely to become obese during adulthood and suffer from conditions associated with it which included Type 2 diabetes.

India faces a double challenge of one of the highest pregnancy and early childhood under-nutrition in the world along with rapidly expanding middle class adults who are adopting unhealthy lifestyles under influence of market forces which predispose to obesity, a risk factor for diabetes.

Given this unique epidemiology of diabetes in India a holistic womb to tomb approach to prevention is called for. Care of mother's nutrition during pregnancy, care of children's nutritional needs and avoidance of unhealthy lifestyles during childhood which track to adult life should be the long term strategy. These should also be an important part of management of those on medications for diabetes. Lifestyle modification can improve blood sugar control and reduce the dose of anti-diabetic medications. However, these should be undertaken under strict supervision of the physician.

Unless this holistic approach of womb to tomb prevention is adopted, there would be a happy symbiosis between market forces promoting unhealthy lifestyles and fast food, and the pharmaceutical industry promoting a host of anti-diabetic medications to be taken till the journey ends in the tomb.

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