

ARPP (INDIA) News

Association of Rehabilitation Psychologists and Professionals (India) ARPP(India)

www.rehabilitationpsychologistsindia.org

Let's continue supporting PWDs / CwSN and enhancing their overall wellbeing during pandemic

Dear Association Members,



The country and the world at large are faced with a major health crisis following the outbreak of COVID-19. Worries about an uncertain future and loss of employment are only some aspects that impact the mental well-being. While social distancing has become the need of the hour, the consequences it has on economic and social health is further impacting the mental health of individuals. Social distancing, quarantining, closure of educational institutes, workplaces, places of worship, and entertainment hubs has confined people to stay in their homes.

The current situation of COVID19 has markedly increased psychological distress both in the general population and more so among Persons with disabilities (PwDs) and children with special needs (CwSN). The global health crisis due to COVID-19, emphasizes the role of rehabilitation psychologists in bridging the gap due to the higher risk faced by persons with disabilities or chronic illnesses, especially in low and middle-income countries like India. The preventive measures have undoubtedly affected the mental health of PwDs and CwSN disproportionately. Some PwDs might require help for basic activities of daily living (ADL) while others may be more independent but find it difficult to navigate due to the precautions that Covid -19 demands. Physical distancing can have drastic negative effects on the mental health of CwSN and disabled individuals. It can cause anxiety and distress and further induce a trauma like situation for them.

Overall, individuals with disabilities and their caregivers are faced with environmental, institutional, financial, and attitudinal barriers that could prevent them from accessing care and important information to decrease their risk of corona virus.

We as rehabilitation psychologists play an important role in supporting PwDs, CwSN and their caregivers to overcome the various barriers. The present situation requires public awareness campaigns for all and especially for PwDs on how to maintain mental wellbeing in the prevailing situation. I would also like to urge the government to increase financial and health security in support of PwDs and CwSN during the pandemic.

Dr. Atla Srinivas Reddy
President ARPP(India)

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Need for Rehabilitation Psychologists in supporting parents of children with disabilities in this time of uncertainty

- Dr. Rajiv Nandy, Ho.Gen.Secretary, ARPP(India)



The world has seen some unprecedented uncertainties in the past one year due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Some countries have faced the brunt of the rampaging virus in the initial phase and could hold the bull by its horn while some were not so lucky. Our country did very well in the initial phase, but now we are facing a widespread uncontrolled outbreak which has penetrated deep into our districts and villages from the cities.

The virus has challenged our nation's economic activities, development, self-dependence, and medical preparedness. It has even challenged our mental health preparedness by checking available trained human resources and the human mind of their composure, balance, and resilience in these trying times.

Children with disabilities are more vulnerable due to the new normal. Their academics, therapies, recreation, and peer support are more disturbed in comparison to their normal counterparts. Coping is a big challenge for them.

Similarly, for parents, many have lost jobs are undergoing financial uncertainties, have even dropped out of therapies. They are under stress to manage all ends.

In the current scenario, Rehabilitation psychologists who serve people with disability and their families across the lifespan assumes much significance. They address behavioural and mental health issues faced by such individuals which includes:

- Emotional coping, mental and psychological status.
- Behaviour that promotes positive adaptation to disability at this time of crisis.
- Minor adjustment issues as well as severe psychopathology.

Procedures include:

- Administration of standardized and non-standardized tests of cognitive and psychological functioning; behavioural observation methods; and culturally sensitive interviewing techniques.
- Evaluation and treatment of both individual and family/caregiver coping and adaptation.
- Individual and group interventions including counselling and psychotherapy, cognitive remediation, behavioural management, enhancing use of assistive technology, and facilitation of healthy team functioning.

According to the 2011 Census, out of the 121 Crore population in India, a whopping 2.68 Crore people are disabled. However, the extent of support at their disposal is limited. Now we are arriving at the next census (2021) which is likely to include all 21 categories of disabilities as per RPWD Act (2016). The number as a result is likely to rise significantly as many new disability conditions have been added since previous PWD Act (1995) which included seven disability conditions.

The demand of trained licensed Rehabilitation Psychologists is high and will go on increasing as we get the figure in the next census. But the number of Rehabilitation Psychologists is very low as per current estimates. Institutions offering courses in Rehabilitation Psychology need to be increased for developing trained manpower for the country. We need to spread awareness on the variety of specialty disability conditions among all stakeholders, namely the general public, affected individuals, their families and the government. Acceptance and action on part the affected individuals and their families complete the process that we as Rehabilitation Psychologists look forward to.

The role of a rehabilitation psychologist is not merely testing, evaluation and intervention but also to focus on the quality of life for a child and his family, where welfare is a significant criteria for treatment goals and rehabilitation to facilitate community integration. If the family needs help, they may look for the following resources and contact:

1. ARPP (India) (Association of Rehabilitation Psychologists & professionals), India website - www.rehabilitationpsychologistsindia.org
2. Kiran- Mental Health Rehabilitation helpline - 24x7 Toll-free Number 1800 599 0019



Caregiving in times of COVID-19

- Dr Sanjana Seth, Rehabilitation Psychologist –CH Chandimandir (WAC) & Member-Executive Council ARPP (India)

The turmoil of COVID-19 rages on. It is a disruptor which has not let anyone be spared of its wrath. A population which is already on the brink takes a further knock in such circumstances. The segment of population under discussion in this article is the caregivers.

Caregiving is a complex process, entailing commitment, responsibility, and sacrifice. It is a task assigned to someone or taken on by a person willingly or under duress. Caregiving varies in duration and the provider's well-being is closely entwined with the diagnosis of a care-recipient as well as the environment in which the service is being given. There is a plethora of emotions felt by the caregiver and they may be internalized as a way of coping mechanism.

In a cultural context, the role of a primary caregiver tends to fall on a woman, and this gets compounded by the circumstances like ongoing pandemic wherein work from home and online schooling is the new norm. The paucity of space, privacy, increased domestic needs etc. can be overwhelming. Caregivers tend to remain in the shadows of their care-recipient, seen but unseen, heard yet unheard. The moot points raised in this article are as follows:

- Is it possible for a primary caregiver to manage single handedly?
- Does the spouse participate in sharing responsibilities?
- Are the children encouraged or assigned a role in supportive caregiving?
- Is the well-being of a caregiver being attended to?
- Does the awareness or willingness to seek supportive intervention from a mental health professional exist?

In a country like ours where there is a huge gap between health care services and the needs, the onus on well-being falls on self. In the case of caregivers, it tends to get pushed to the realms of neglect. Self is never prioritized in caregiving and unless the family members around the person are proactive in their observations and support, the well-being is compromised immensely.

Last but not the least, importance of Rehabilitation Psychologists in identifying the stressors for a caregiver and facilitation of well-being cannot be emphasized enough. The role is of paramount importance in the current scenario of COVID-19 where the percentage of people needing help for their well-being has gone up significantly. Associations like ARPP (India) can bridge this gap *viz a viz* psycho-education, de-stigmatization, diagnosis, and timely intervention to mitigate the stress and enhance the caregiver well-being.

Home approaches for parents having children with special needs to cope with the lockdown

- Dr Vandana , Rehabilitation Psychologist / Special Educator, RD Gardi Medical College (Ujjain) & Member-Executive Council ARPP(India)



Meera has a nine-year-old son, Bharath (names changed) with autism spectrum disorder, ADHD and moderate intellectual disability. Before the lock down, he had a routine of going to an inclusive school with added attention from a special educator in resource room. He had the full support from school administration and his peers. He was also taking occupation therapy and swimming classes. During the first lockdown, Bharath was excited to be at home and was happy that he didn't have to get up early for school. By the end of second lockdown, he was experiencing emotional distress that was shown as getting cranky ,moodiness and aggressive behaviour. Meera found that if she pressured him to study or to do activities ,he would have a meltdown and even refuse to take precautions like washing hands and wearing a mask . The social distancing as a preventive measure for corona was isolating Bharath from playing with other children in the neighborhood. He was getting bored and began spending most of his time watching TV or playing games on mobile. The increasing screen time disturbed his moods and behaviours furthermore.

This maybe a common scene in households of most parents having children and more so among those having children with special needs. Many parents like Meera are facing similar kinds of challenges these days and are experiencing anxiety. Below are few things that parents like Meera can do at home during lockdown:

1. **Self-care** : Parents need to take care of themselves first as children are watching them as role models. If they get stressed and lash out, then that naturally influences the child's mood and behaviour.
2. **New Routines**: Try to establish new " Normal routines " and incorporate all physical, social ,sensory ,emotional ,play and academic needs of children in the new daily living schedule . Making use of visual and pictorial cues works best as it is easy to see and follow the visual timetable and time allotment. This not only helps in following instructions but can also build the child's self-organization skills.
3. **Communicate**: Talk to children about the current pandemic situation and explain with pictures, videos on the importance of washing hands, use of sanitizers and wearing a mask . Parents should themselves wear mask while going out of house .
4. **Stay connected with others virtually**: Since children are away from school and friends from long time they are missing on social interaction and fun , parents can arrange virtual meetings on phone / laptop so that they can see and talk with their friends and relatives .

The shutdown of schools and therapy centres has not only disturbed the daily routine of children but also is affecting their physical, sensory, social and communication skills. Given the circumstances, parents often experience anxiety and are facing difficulty in dealing with their children with special needs at home. The following home activities can be helpful.

For Motor Activities:

- Running in open spaces like terrace or balcony
- Pushing and pulling heavy objects
- Pillow fighting or tug of wars
- Rolling beds
- Lifting and carrying heavy objects
- Outdoor activities like climbing, jumping, cycling etc. with necessary precautions
- Play with dough and TheraBand's
- Tracing, writing on sand (for fine motor skills and sensory stimulation)
- Folding clothes /paper
- Cutting, pasting, and coloring as fun activities

For Executive Functions:

- Play on multisensory surfaces
- Teach them to clean and arrange their beds and rooms
- Make visual schedule of daily routine and give positive reinforcement to follow it
- Let them do their daily chores with minimum assistance and provide positive reinforcement for that
- Sorting and arranging vegetables and grains
- Play board and memory games along with family members
- Promptly correcting or redirecting negative behaviours and offering a chance for a redo
- Taking help in kitchen can be an activity of enjoyment as well as training them

For Emotional Regulation :

- Even though schedules feel off; prioritize getting enough sleep, eat balanced meals and stay active. These fundamentals will reduce stress and improve everyone's state of mind.
- Stay connected with loved ones and friends via phone or video chat or make a card to maintain the family support network is a key coping strategy.
- Share relaxed moments with your family when you are not focusing on work or school.
- Play games with your kids, go around, do cooking projects together and enjoy family movie nights.
- Be kind to yourself and the most important aspect is to simply make sure your child feels safe and loved



Geriatric care: Challenges faced by caregiver families

- Seema Zutshi, Rehabilitation Psychologist (New Delhi) & Member-Executive Council ARPP (India)

The increase in human life-expectancy is a success story of advancement in public health and management that needs to be celebrated. Every country in the world is experiencing population longevity and a higher proportion of people more than 65 years of age in their demographic. Globally life expectancy has increased from 45.51 years in 1950 to 72.63 years in 2020 and is further expected to increase to 81.88 years by 2050. In India life expectancy has increased from 35.21 years in 1950 to 69.73 years in 2020 and is expected to reach 74.91 years by 2050 [United Nations - World Population Prospects, 2019]. Globally the proportion of population of more than 65 years of age is likely to reach 16 percent by 2050, and India is set to become the country with the highest population of this demographic [United Nations - World Population ageing, 2019]. Although we live in this new reality of human longevity, we are unprepared to face the challenges that it brings. Longevity has increased physical and mental health disorders amongst the elderly, which has led to increased burden of caregiving at the institutional and home/family level. In times to come, caregiving is expected to become more intensive, complex, and long lasting than in the past as the elderly tend to live longer with mental or physical complications.

In India, the primary caregivers for the elderly are typically their immediate family members. Caregivers are at an increased risk of adverse effects on virtually every aspect of their lives - ranging from their health and quality of life to their relationships and economic security. They experience physical and psychological impacts, especially those who spend long hours caring for older adults with advanced Dementia, Alzheimer, and Parkinson's, as they are always 'on call'. They often neglect their own health, which may worsen their preexisting illnesses or increase vulnerability to stress-related issues. The social effects of caregiving range from relationship issues with the spouse, children, and other close individuals, to changes in social activities. In some instances, they may experience extreme, irrevocable life-altering impacts such as marital infidelity, spousal abuse, and/or divorce. As a result of this negative impact on the caregiver, the elderly in need of care may also face mistreatment and neglect. This becomes a vicious cycle.

Such hardship leads to caregivers seeking psychological support for stress and anxiety. During counseling sessions, they often express lack of knowledge and skills on managing the elderly, as well as lack of institutional support. In developed nations, the challenges of elder care are well recognized and to some extent, support has been made available through institutional care, awareness generation and training programs and support groups. However, in India, although care for the elderly is an important topic, little effort has been made to acknowledge the challenges associated with it, or to provide support. The health and well-being of the caretakers often goes unaddressed.

To enhance the quality of life of both the elderly and the caregivers, it is imperative to address this issue at the policy and program level. Firstly, programs need to focus on active ageing for the elderly and creating health-promoting self-care programs for caregivers. These self-care programs need to focus on the importance of caregiver's general well-being through getting proper sleep, maintaining a healthy diet, exercising, seeking preventive health care and taking psychological support. Secondly, teaching institutions should incorporate caregiving of elderly – its means and methods, in their curriculum as part of life skills. Thirdly, at the larger institutional level, a fundamental change needs to take place. Seeking institutional help is considered a taboo in India and those facilities that are available are not of quality.

Generating awareness of the new age elder care challenges and importance of taking professional support is essential, along with setting-up of quality institutions including medically enabled old-age homes.

In view of this, the role of psychologists becomes crucial in addressing the mental healthcare needs of not just the elderly, but increasingly also of the caregivers. The focus needs to increase for supporting the caregiver families by making them well equipped to deal with the challenges of geriatric care and providing them with counseling for emotional distress and strengthening their social support.

ARPP(India) Activities

RELEASE OF ARPP(INDIA) NEWSLETTER



The first edition of the newsletter was unveiled on May 9, 2020 by Koppula Ishwar, Minister of All Welfare Departments, Telangana (Left) along with Dr. Atla Srinivas Reddy, ARPP (India) President.

ONLINE SURVEY

Given the ARPP (India) did an online survey about -"Online education in context of schooling as future educational system". 1056 individuals from various states across India participated in this survey. The highlights of the survey are :

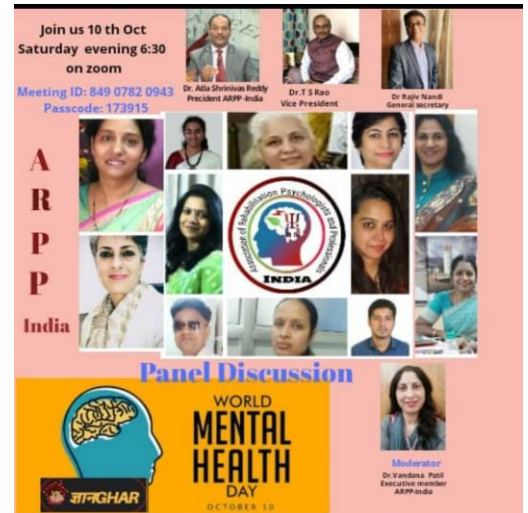
- ❖ While some agreed that online education system is the replacement for traditional conventional education-system and has more benefits than classroom learning, most of the participants do not think so.
- ❖ Most participants agreed that online learning platforms help students to become more independent learners. However, they also agreed that it negatively impacts the social and interpersonal development among students, and the relationship between students and teachers.
- ❖ The survey also depicted that while online learning ensures bringing parents and teachers on the same page in the child's education, prolonged online classroom sessions can affect the child's physical, mental, social, and psychological health.

NATIONAL ARPP (INDIA) CONFERENCE

Decision to hold the 1st National ARPP (India) conference was taken. It was decided unanimously to host the conference in January 2021. See scientific poster below in announcements for more information.

WEBINAR ON WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

On October 10, 2020; ARPP (India) organized the first Webinar on World Mental Health Day. Our members of Executive Council- Dr. Vandana, Ms. Neeta Jain and Ms. Vaishnavi Kulkarni spoke about the importance of mental health, the warning signs indicating the and mental well-being practices; respectively. This was followed by a panel discussion. Almost 80 Rehabilitation Psychologists from across India participated in the webinar.



WEBINAR ON GERIATRIC ISSUES

The West Bengal group of ARPP (India) also organized a webinar on 'Geriatric issues' on October 18, 2020. The common problems faced by elderly people and ways to achieve graceful ageing were discussed . Almost 50 participants got an insight into the topic.



A SLIGHT CHANGE IN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

We bid adieu to Dr. Chand Trehan and Ms. Usha Rani Pakeerabad as they have decided to withdraw from being an Executive Committee Member. ARPP (India) heartily welcomed **Dr. Sanjana Seth** and **Ms. Rupali Mohbe** as the new Executive Committee members.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



ARPP (India) takes great pleasure in inviting all the participants to attend the **1st Virtual conference on “Mental Health & Rehabilitation: Bridging the Gap Across Lifespan”**. This conference is an opportunity to bring to fore mental health issues across various stages of life, namely, infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age.

For more information visit www.rehabilitationpsychologistsindia.org on ‘ARPP (India) Conference’

MEMBERSHIP

Membership comprises of 2 categories-

Professional Life Membership
Professional Annual Membership

Membership Fee-

Professional Life Membership	- INR 5000/- (one-time payment)
Professional Annual Membership	- INR 1000/- (Renewed Annually)

For more information, visit

www.rehabilitationpsychologistsindia.org

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