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HEALTHLINE

Paramount's Monthly Magazine

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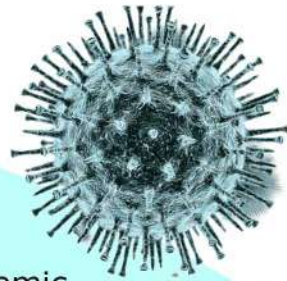
*It always
seems
impossible
until it's
done.*

— Nelson Mandela

—””—

**What to look forward to in the fight against
COVID-19!**

COVID 19 : Recap



It was on March 11th, 2020 that WHO characterised COVID-19 to be a pandemic due to its alarming levels of spread and failure to contain it. After days of observation, research and interaction with health officials in Wuhan, China - where the first case was reported - it was understood that this virus is transmitted from human-to-human.

And before we knew it, there were country wide lockdowns announced across the globe! The only way to break this chain reaction of spreading the virus was to isolate oneself and physically not come in contact with another human - the social distancing norm.

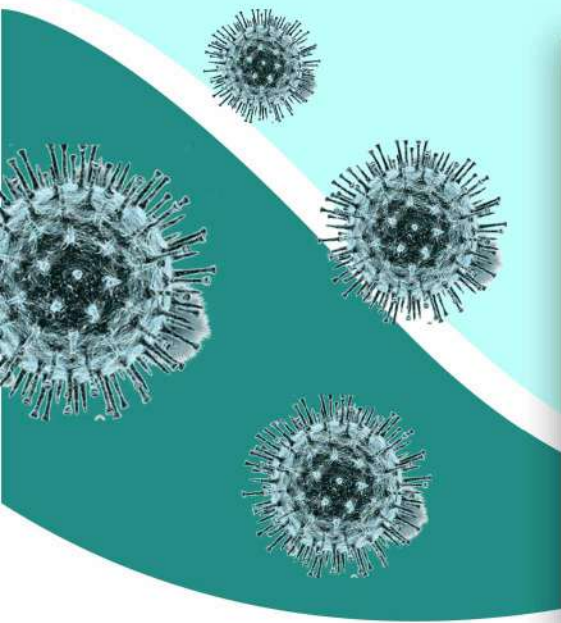
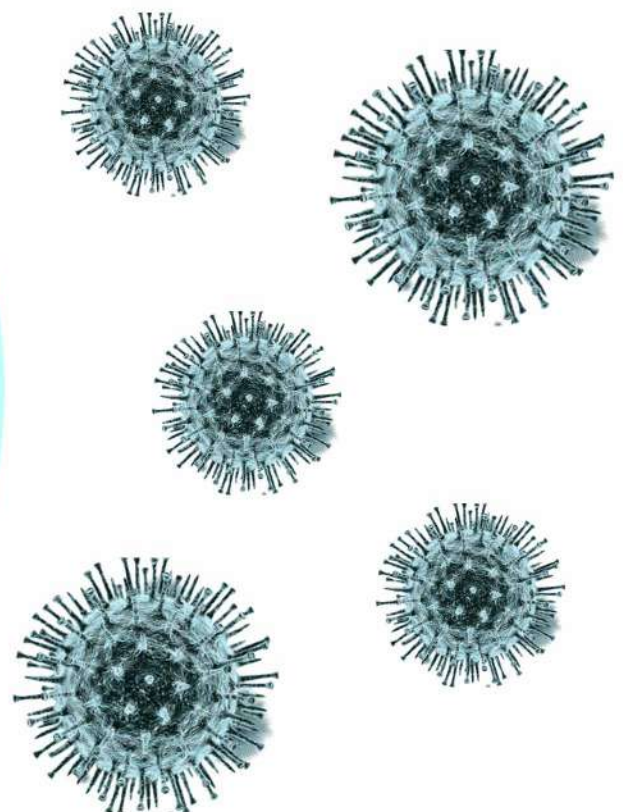


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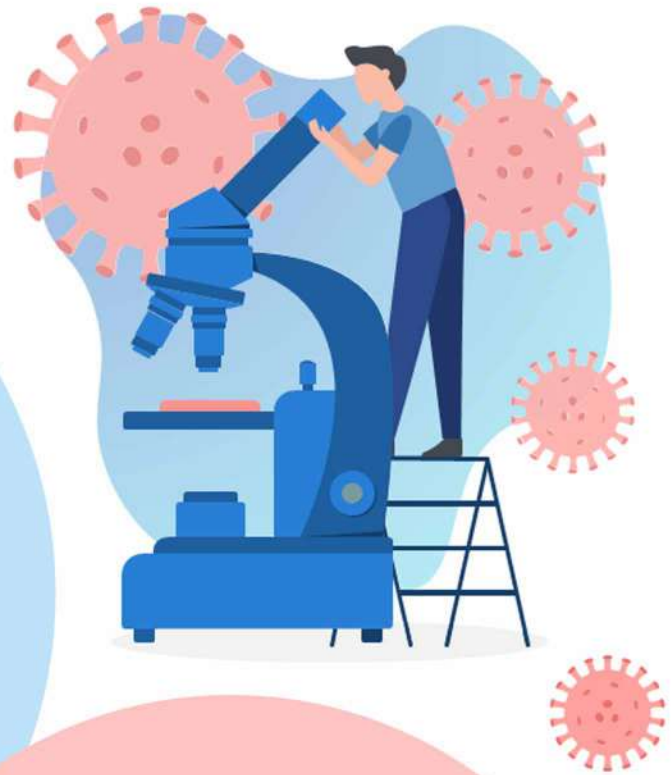
It's been months since the world was informed of the first case of coronavirus spread in humans and everyone is still struggling to find a way to contain this disease. And if it isn't evident enough already, the governments, health officials, citizens all around the globe are just hoping and praying for one simple goal - to live a life of normalcy.



COVID 19 : Finding a vaccine

Ever since the scientific community caught a whiff of this strange new disease, they have put in their time and resources in fighting this battle for the survival of human kind.

Yes yes, don't be surprised by the dramatic language we use here - it may sound like one of Hollywood's scripted story (although at this point we wish it would be), it only resonates the gravity of the situation.

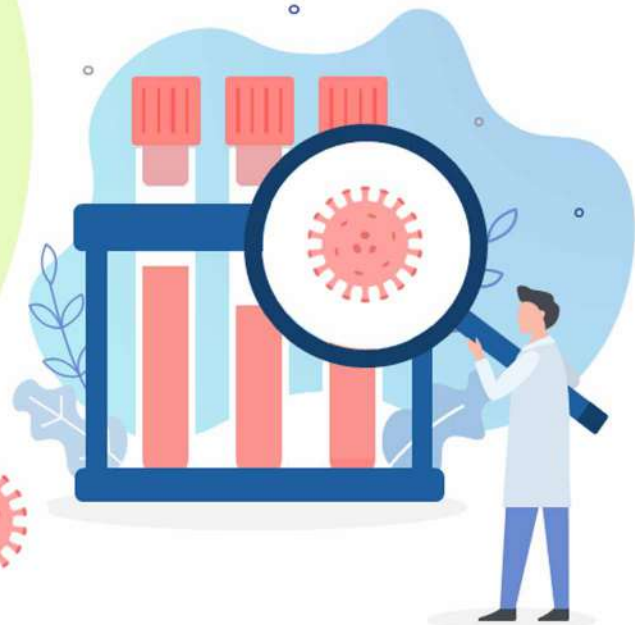


So, why haven't we been able to find a vaccine yet? Well, to give a simple answer, it is difficult to hasten the process of creating a vaccine for a virus that we do not fully understand. It took months for researchers to diagnose COVID-19 to be able to move forward with experiments. And, in general, coming up with a vaccine takes years!

In fact, not just years but decades!

The human papilloma vaccination took 26 years to develop; vaccine for rotavirus was developed in 26 years and the syncytial virus - a respiratory virus affecting infants - still remains undefeated after 50 years of vaccine research. Not to dampen your spirits, but that's just the reality of how vaccine development works

However, here's the silver lining...



COVID-19 : Vaccine candidates

According to WHO, as of 24th of July, there are 25 candidate vaccines in clinical evaluation for COVID-19.

China, England, Japan, India, Russia, USA, Australia, Egypt and many more countries from all continents are tirelessly working together to find a solution to this pandemic. In fact, earlier in mid-May, United States of America announced an initiative called "Operation Warp Speed" which aims to have a vaccine ready for general use by the end of 2020.



Before vaccines can be ready for general use, they go through three different phases of testing, after they have been tested on experimental animals:

1. A few healthy individuals volunteer to take this vaccine - this gives an idea of dosage and safety.
2. Taking a larger group sample - this phase works towards perfecting the ideal safe dosage amount to be administered in humans and compare the results with an unvaccinated group.
3. Waiting for a healthy body to be exposed to the virus naturally and then administering the perfect dose.

The third phase out of the three usually is the most time consuming. And even after that, these vaccines are developed in small batches only for experimental basis and not commercial use. The manufacturing of these vaccines for general administration is another hurdle altogether that needs.



COVID-19 : Where's India at?

India has 2 vaccine candidates developed by:

1. Bharat Biotech International Limited in collaboration with Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)
2. Zydus Cadila Healthcare Ltd.

These have been approved to go into first and second phase of human trials. According to a report in Economic Times health section - the Drugs Controller General of India informed of these two vaccine candidates to have successfully passed the toxicity studies in experimental animals.



Photo credit: Al Jazeera

According to the ICMR Director General, as quoted in Economic Times Health, "Since India is one of the largest vaccine producers in the world, it is the country's "moral responsibility" to fast-track vaccine development process to break the chain of coronavirus transmission."

He commented on the vaccine trial as follows:

- "Two indigenous Indian candidate vaccines have got clearance to start early phase human trials this month."
- "They have got their sites ready and are doing the clinical study on approximately 1,000 human volunteers each at different sites. They are trying to do early clinical testing for these two indigenous vaccine candidates."

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