WORLD JOURNAL OF PHARMACEUTICAL AND MEDICAL RESEARCH

COVID -19 PANDEMIC AS GLOBAL ECO-AWAKENING AGENT AND THE HOPE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Said Shalaby[1] and Devendra Kumar Awasthi[2]*

[1]CAM Depatment, Medical Division, National Research Centre, Cairo Egypt.
[2]Sri Jai Narain Mishra Post Graduate College Lucknow U.P. India.

*Corresponding Author: Devendra Kumar Awasthi
Sri Jai Narain Mishra Post Graduate College Lucknow U.P. India.

SUMMARY

It is a fact that Covid-19 had injected the fuel for eco-awakening in the world. Many measures are done for it`s control. Environmental sustainability is the major factor for the actual control of infectious pandemics. Now, we can control the disease to a limit; through mass vaccination and being at a distance from each other as well as compulsory mask wearing.

Organisational, cognitive, philosophical, and ethical frameworks as preventive agencies in promoting structural and cultural transformations for enhancing the resilience of individuals and societies should also be considered.

COVID-19 pandemic, heightened environmental awareness, food improvement, reduction of global greenhouse gas emission the use of clean water, using local products (reducing transport and air pollution), decrease fishing and tourism, creation of new small jobs and shift to clean energy.

Globally, most peoples have never witnesses a threat like Covid-19.Time is short for having an effective vaccine or a drug that can control this virus. Countries are trying to control this pandemic; but still strategies are failing in avoidance of this disease and its impacts.

Trials are done for health maintenance and life–supporting processes in the presence of this COVID-19 crisis. Now, we can control the disease to a limit; through mass vaccination and being at a distance from each other as well as compulsory mask wearing.

Due to globulisation, the increased connectivity enables systems that can be globally integrated; but must be more transparent[1] The society is driven by emotions, infrastructure and environment.[2]

It is to be mentioned that the society must go beyond the control of the risk` s approach in planning and implementation of strategies to cope with hazards. Subsequently, the organisational, cognitive, philosophical, and ethical frameworks as preventive agencies in promoting structural and cultural transformations for enhancing the resilience of individuals and societies should also be considered.[3]

In the current crisis, we are faced with two particularly important options of risk management: a) the one which concerns the total monitoring or empowerment of citizens; and b) the one which concerns nationalist isolation or global solidarity. Both methods will present their effectiveness with the end of the threat. Furthermore, it is essential that countries have effective and smart leaders with solid cognitive, emotional, moral, and technological knowledge to help them to construct prudent, effective, and objective plans that are equitably implemented among all levels of society. What is also important is to keep the democratic freedom of citizens and their personal data privacy intact.[3]

The COVID-19 hazard increased people's awareness of the pressures that a virus can put on us and of the uncertainty that is intrinsic to the human condition. It also reminds people of the global stresses humans have created on the ecological systems, thus disrupting the balance of these systems. Moreover, a systemic approach to resilience and ecological sustainability is needed for enhancing the human, societal, and ecological health in the Anthropocene.[3]

Lambertini,[4] reported that the natural world is growing rapidly and particularly in emerging markets, where people are feeling more acutely the impacts of deforestation, unsustainable fishing, species extinction and the decline of eco-systems. The research also pointed out how the loss of nature had increased people's vulnerability to pandemics, undermining efforts to tacking the climate crisis and threatening livelihoods.

COVID-19 appeared to give the environment a new lease of life – at least that's how it looked in the beginning. Transport halted, factories went quiet, and scenic locations looked immaculate for the first time in decades. Decreased activity at this scale saw carbon emissions drop drastically. This all sounds like a considerable win for the environment, and for people's health. And it would be – if it were sustainable. Sadly, this isn't the case. Pew Research Center found that many people globally are as concerned about climate change as they are about the spread of infectious diseases. As the world grapples to control the virus, the issue of sustainability and our impact on the environment continues to bubble under the surface.[5]

One of the positive consequences of the mobility restrictions imposed to curb the spread of COVID-19 has been a reduction of more than 5% in global greenhouse gas emissions. However, in order to comply with the Paris Agreement and thus limit global warming to less than 2°C relative to pre-industrial levels, it would be necessary to maintain a rate of emission reduction over the next few years similar to that seen in 2020, which has been the result of an exceptional situation. Given that the reduction in emissions in 2020 has occurred at the cost of a drastic fall in economic activity which has worsened living conditions, it is desirable that other factors should be the driving forces behind the fight against climate change in the future. . The steps for reducing greenhouse gas emissions must be aimed at decoupling economic growth from the consumption of natural and energy resources, as well as at producing cleaner energy.[6]

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, heightened environmental awareness has been amplified by the perception of the benefits of living in a cleaner world. The reduction in pollution during the weeks of full lockdown allowed many citizens to see first-hand the increased quality of life and well-being that comes with breathing cleaner air.[6] In this regard, a study conducted in China showed that, in cities that experienced the greatest reduction in air pollution during the wave of coronavirus in February and March 2020, citizens' interest in environmental issues increased to a greater extent and more measures considered green were adopted in the following months.[6]

Perception of the risk of climate change after having lived through the pandemic could influence people's desire to consume goods and services more responsibly. In particular, consumers could increase their preference for local products, which would help reduce emissions from transportation. This is suggested by the result of a survey conducted in Germany by Deloitte, in which 28% of participants say that in future they will purchase local products more frequently than prior to the pandemic, compared with 68% and 4%, respectively, who would not change or would reduce their consumption of local products. However, while this is a step forward, some studies indicate how this rise in local consumption will

have a relatively modest contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, as the pollution generated by transportation in the food industry, for instance, is not very high.[6]

Aside from the very short-lived gains, which were quickly lost as economic activity resumed, the outbreak has created a whole host of problems. The production of single-use plastics and waste has increased considerably. A study by SYSTEMIQ forecasts that the flow of plastic into oceans will nearly treble by 2040 if governments and industries don't take greater action to combat the growing plastics crisis. At the same time, other changes in consumers' behavior during the pandemic have contributed to the waste problem. Consumers are shopping online more and consuming more takeout food, both of which are still heavily reliant on overusing packaging or single-use plastics. In February 2020, food delivery giant Just Eat partnered with sustainable packaging startup Notpla to trial tree and grass pulp boxes lined with seaweed, which decompose in around 4 weeks.[6]

Improvements are associated with young age, socio-economic status, frequency and enjoyment of cooking-from-scratch and, more generally, an attentive attitude towards the quality, provenance and materiality of food that, in turn, the COVID-19 crisis appears to have re-kindled. Moreover, by highlighting five areas of institutional intervention (i.e., young people, time, tools, food supply at work, and local food chains) on which to focus in order to ensure the current crisis does not represent a missed opportunity for creating the necessary conditions for sustainable food production and consumption to take hold as the 'new' normal in the post-pandemic era.[7]

The first is time, which the lockdown demonstrated to be a key variable in the effective improvement of nutrition. A much-needed re-assessment of work-life balance will endow individuals with the adequate time to devote to food selection and preparation. The second area regards the provision to consumers of appropriate tools for recognizing and pursuing better nutrition: food knowledge, education, and access to healthy–sustainable food, both in its physical and economic sense, are therefore be promoted. Thirdly, interventions are needed to improve food supply at work, i.e., spur the establishment of a more favorable food environment in and around workplaces to make healthy and sustainable lunch-time habits as easy to follow at work as at home. Fourth, focus on local and short food supply chains in order to strengthen and disseminate the availability and affordability of sustainable food options. Lastly,the key actors on whom to call to boost this great transformation are young people. Their dynamism, susceptibility to change, and environmentally friendly orientation have been expressed even during the harsh days of lockdown: their worldviews, dispositions, and attitudes are likely, if properly channeled, to bring about the paradigm shift in

the consumption of food and environmental resources that the planet desperately needs.[8]

Another transformation of consumption patterns that has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic is the increase in e-commerce, which was particularly marked in 2020. Once the mobility restrictions were eased, retail sector purchases carried out online remained well above those observed in 2019, suggesting that the COVID-19 pandemic will have a persistent effect on consumption patterns. However, it is not clear in which direction a potential increase in online consumption would affect the fight against climate change, as the change in greenhouse gas emissions will depend on the delivery method used in online purchases. As an example, receiving products purchased online directly at home is more polluting than traditional retail given that, in the final step of the distribution chain, the delivery of the order from the last distribution point to the buyer (last mile delivery) results in a journey undertaken in a polluting means of transport. In contrast, with a system in which the distribution is carried out at a centralised collection point, greenhouse gas emissions are reduced compared to the two previous cases.[9]

The top actions people say they plan to do in the next 6 months are: reduce food waste, walk or cycle more, and reduce the amount of plastic/single-use packaging they use. But they can't do it alone. Governments, brands, policy makers, and manufacturers are all instrumental in making these ambitions a reality. COVID-19 has shown us just how difficult it will be to address climate issues. Energy emissions are set to drop around 6% this year, but to reach the goal of keeping global temperature increases to less than 2 degrees, net emissions of greenhouse gases must fall to around zero by 2050. We've got a long way to go. Analysis from The Guardian found that in at least 18 of the world's biggest economies, pandemic rescue packages are dominated by spending that has a harmful environmental impact.[10]

Every industry – from aviation to manufacturing – needs to take responsibility to reassess their supply chains as well as their operations, and make tangible steps forward in tackling this growing problem. Several fashion brands have promised to make sustainability front-and-center to their recovery, while Shell plans for a major restructuring as it prepares to invest more in renewable energy. Unlike the outbreak, for which there will likely be some kind of a solution in the next two years, tackling climate change is a bigger, long-term battle that will take decades to improve – with catastrophic health, economic, and environmental consequences if we don't. The outbreak has taught us so many lessons about our impact on the world we live in, and the changes we need to make. Don't let this opportunity go to waste.[10]

A new report by the Economist Intelligence Unit found that overwhelmingly people around the world are seeking out sustainable goods and companies that operate that way — there has been a 71% increase in the popularity of web searches for sustainable goods over the past five years, and the percentage grew even during the COVID-19 pandemic. The World Wildlife Fund commissioned the study and found that across developed and developing countries, consumers hold companies responsible for forcing positive change and believe that businesses must commit to protecting nature and natural systems.[11]

Why This Matters: When the G7's big economic powers meet n June 2021 in the United Kingdom, both the climate and the biodiversity crisis will be on the agenda. It will be interesting to see how far the meeting summary or joint declaration leans forward on the so-called "30×30 proposal" given the big change in the U.S.' posture under the Biden administration. Business leaders from these nations — or the "B7" — just completed its meeting and they recommended that the G7 nations should "prioritize the development of markets that value biodiversity, natural environments, natural carbon sinks, and nature-positive business activity" and support businesses in "quantifying their impact on nature and how to value natural assets and services.".[11]

Perhaps the most surprising finding is that consumer eco-awareness is growing not just in developed and wealthy countries, but is also pronounced in developing and emerging economies. For example, there was an increase in demand for sustainable products (as measured by web searches) of 24% in Indonesia and an astonishing rise of 120% in Ecuador. Similarly, according to Cristianne Close, the Global Markets Practice Leader, at WWF International, since 2016 "over 159 million people have signed online petitions in support of nature, with protests growing in strength and frequency" and amazingly "96% of survey respondents in Brazil see nature loss as a serious problem." Consumers in the developing world are seeing that if they buy cheap products today they will pay a price in the future as the loss of nature and the climate breakdown take their tolls.[11]

More and more consumers are holding businesses accountable and demanding that they drive positive change — that big brands bear as much responsibility as governments to achieving long-term sustainability. For example, Close cites one survey in which 66% of all respondents, and 75% of millennial respondents, said they consider sustainability when making a purchase. Moreover, according to Close, in China, "41% of consumers say that they want eco-friendly products." This trend will only grow as social media and millennials' come into positions of responsibility in government and business and directly increase the demand for sustainability. On the flip side, more companies are taking note of this trend — they see that customers are switching products or services when a company violates their values. They also see the "upside" that there are market opportunities for

companies that brand themselves by offering eco-friendly products or speaking up against weakening of environmental protection. For example, in the UK, the market for ethically and sustainably sourced goods increased four-fold since the year 2000 in 2019 was worth £41 billion.[11]

Isabel Schatzschneider (2021) stated that biodiversity loss threatens one million animals and plants with extinction. But as we had celebrated United Nations International Day for Biodiversity (May 22nd); we see a silver lining: consumers are waking up. There is an 'eco-awakening', where environmental consciousness and consumerism intertwine, transforming how we live and interact with the world.[12]

However, going green can be tricky. Faced with a lack of transparency, consumers are often unable to make the right choices, dooming the climate unless we adopt transformative solutions.[12]

After the events of 2020, consumers made one thing clear: they want a more sustainable world. The WWF recently reported on this eco-awakening, finding that 93 per cent of Europeans consider biodiversity a 'very serious' problem, reflecting a change in consumption patterns which will predict how consumers act in the future. For example, a recent report by Future Market Insights discovered the 'organic' skincare market is expected to grow 8.1 per cent in the next decade, as more people use the experiences of Covid-19, climate change and increasing health problems to influence purchases.[12]

Yet as more consumers make the transition to 'eco-friendly' choices, there is a risk of companies marketing unsustainable products as sustainable to meet demand. The Competition and Markets Authority in the United Kingdom has promised to tackle misleading 'green' claims, having found that 40 per cent of globally advertised online products featured false or misleading environmental assertions.[12]

The term 'organic' has been particularly controversial. A UK study discovered organic produce yielded 40 per cent less than alternatives, therefore requiring up to 1.5 times more land. An *MIT Technology Review* report found that due to this increase in land—often outsourced to vulnerable tropical forests such as around the Amazon—organic produce released 21 per cent more greenhouse gases than its counterparts.[12]

Ultimately, if governments and technology combine adequately to support consumers in their quest to become more eco-friendly, the climate crisis is one step closer to being solved. The sustainable consumer revolution is coming—is everyone ready?.[12]

The COVID-19 pandemic has mobilized the entire world to try to contain its spread. From school closures, to travel restrictions, to social distancing and the shuttering of non-essential businesses — all these measures aimed at limiting the spread of a disease that has caused worldwide havoc on health systems and people.[13]

While a debate can be had about how fast measures began to be implemented by various governments, or how comprehensive these were, the pandemic has brought near universal action. Contrast this with the slow, inconsistent and even counterproductive way the world has up to now responded to another impending global crisis — the destruction of the planet we live on through climate change and environmental degradation. Climate change is inarguably the world's largest looming public health emergency; however, though science supports this claim, many continue to ignore it.[13]

Climate change did not cause coronavirus, but there is increasing evidence that the environmental destruction of our planetary ecosystems and wildlife habitats through climate change and biodiversity loss have made it easier for pathogens to proliferate where they might not have before. In addition, data gathered from COVID-19 related deaths seem to suggest that the virus is particularly lethal for those living in areas with high levels of air pollution due to the increased rates of respiratory disease in the population.[13]

With the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to spread, national and local governments are urged to treat waste management, including medical, household and other hazardous waste, as an urgent and essential public service in order to minimise possible secondary impacts upon health and the environment.[14]

The fight against plastic pollution is being hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, as the use of disposable masks, gloves and other protective equipment soars. Plastic does not inherently make something clean and safe. Experts are proposing to bring back the bring-your-own-cup scheme. UN agencies and partners insist that, if effective measures are put into place, the amount of plastics discarded every year can be significantly cut, or even eliminated.[14]

Hosing down migrants and workers with bleach to 'disinfect' them is a ghastly and inhumane practice to combat COVID-19, said UN Special Rapporteur on toxic waste. The Special Rapporteur appealed to States and businesses on the dire need to protect the brave doctors, nurses, first responders, and others on the front lines in this fight.[14]

COVID-19 is having an impact on animals. Great apes, of which seven species are already threatened by extinction, are potentially vulnerable to this new virus. Lockdowns and the loss of tourism revenue also create challenges for protecting wildlife. The cost of COVID-19 to zoos could mean extinction for the 77 species of

plants and animals (at least) that are extinct in the wild and exist only in zoological and botanical collections.[14]

Researchers found that air pollution has intensified the pandemic. But the lockdown and related measures implemented by countries to stop the spread of COVID-19 have also led to a decrease in economic activities and drop in road transport, temporarily cleaning skies and decreasing levels of certain air pollutants.[14]

The spread of COVID-19 is closely related to water and sanitation, as cleaning hands can reduce the transmission and help people stay healthy. But today billions of people still lack safe water, sanitation and handwashing and funding is inadequate.[14]

The global lockdown measures have led to a decrease in fishing, tourism and maritime transport activities. For some, this can be seen as an opportunity to ensure a sustainable development of these industries while recovering.[14]

As regards textile industry and fashion as example of post-Covid change in industry; Warren stated that: This is an opportunity to reset, and at Artistic Fabric Mills, we have defined three goals that we believe need immediate action. The first is to tackle the issue of excess inventory. We are finding ways to work with our brand partners to reduce, reuse and recycle deadstock, surplus production and leftover inventory. Second, reduce our dependency on water- and energy-thirsty crops, like virgin cotton, by switching to alternative options such as hemp, recycled cotton, Tencel and biodegradable fibers, and focus on protective finishes to offer value. And third, scale up sustainably by investing in the most sustainable technology available today.[14] Green purchasing, water recycling, automated and eco-friendly machinery are key areas of investment for us moving forward. It's hard to say what the consumer's mindset will be in the aftermath of COVID-19, but we're committed to doing our part to better educate the consumer on the merits of sustainable choices and strengthen our circular mission by closing the loop on our manufacturing process.[15]

Many of small grocery stores are providing home delivery services .Just we go for a little google search using town or country as keywords, together with food delivery and small grocery store and you find out what you need. Some cities across different countries already have started creating lists with these small and local owners who are available to do deliveries at request. Despite the absence of a website from which you can choose the products (and brands) you are buying, a phone number can connect you to these owners. Arrange the delivery details and it will likely take you a few hours or a couple of days to get what you asked for.[16]

Generally, we can say that there is actually a global eco-awakening during Covid-19 and we hope it`s time for environmental sustainability

REFERENCECS

1. Goldin, M. Mariathasan, The Butterfly Defect: How Globalization Creates Systemic Risks, and what to Do about it, Princeton Academic Press, 2014.
2. G. Bachelard, the formation of the scientific mind-A contribution to a psychoanalysis of objective knowledge, in: Introduced, Translated and Annotated by Mary McAllester Jones, Copyright © Clinamen Press, 2002.
3. A. Zabaniotou, A systemic approach to resilience and ecological sustainability during the COVID-19 pandemic: Human, societal, and ecological health as a system-wide emergent property in the Anthropocene. Global Transitions, 2020; 2: 116-126.
4. COVID-19 pandemic powers eco-awakening globally -https://www.thehindu.com › Sci-Tech › Environment.
5. How to Make Sustainability Part of the Recovery in 2021 - GWIhttps://blog.gwi.com › trends › sustainability-in, 2021.
6. The outbreak has created its own environmental issues.*Sustainability,* 2021; *13*(10): 5661. https://doi.org/10.3390/su13105661.
7. COVID-19 as an Opportunity for a Healthy-Sustainable Food Transition. An Analysis of Dietary Transformations during the First Italian Lockdown. https://www.mdpi.com › htm.
8. Will environmental awareness increase after the COVID-19 pandemic? https://www.caixabankresearch.com › activity-growth.
9. Poore and T. Nemecek «Reducing food's environmental impacts through producers and consumers». Science, 2018; 360(6392): 987-992.
10. How to Make Sustainability Part of the Recovery in GWI https://blog.gwi.com › trends › sustainability-in, 2021.
11. New Report Finds "Eco-Awakening" By Consumers Globally https://www.ourdailyplanet.com › story › new-report-fi. MAY 19, 2021.
12. Isabel Schatzschneider Ethical consumerism meets 'eco-awakening'. https://socialeurope.eu › ethical-consumerism -meets-ec, 2021.
13. The forgotten crisis | UNICEF Office of Global Insight & Policy. May The forgotten crisis .*Why responding to COVID-19 should not side-track us from climate action* https://www.unicef.org › globalinsight › stories › forgot, 2020.
14. COVID-19 and the Environment – Geneva Environment NetworkMay 2020
15. https://www.genevaenvironmentnetwork.org › updates.
16. Warren, L. Pandemic Awakening a New Sense of Responsibility in the Denim -Buisness... https://sourcingjournal.com › denim › denim-business, 2021.
17. How Coronavirus Is An Awakening Call To Support local and Small buisinesses. https://youmatter.world › support-shop-local-small-busi.