

A study on the Role of Sportsmen in Improving Health Awareness During and Post Pandemic

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Abstract - Coronavirus pandemic knows no border, countries, or continent. The outbreak of such an unprecedented pandemic has questioned the adequacy and preparedness of the global public healthcare system. Having a well-established, efficient health care system in the country is a pre-requisite to deal with such chaotic situation. The problem is further aggravated by the lack of health-related literacy among common people. During such a situation sportsman or athlete has a greater role to play as role models. Athletes like other celebrities can play an important role in creating health awareness amongst people about health and hygiene factors, social distancing etc., and can contribute immensely in curbing the spread of virus. In the absence of availability of no-specific drug or vaccine, global spread has the potential to overburden health systems. Mass gathering like sport event can cause the spread of infectious disease to a larger extent. Therefore, by and large all sports events and gatherings have been suspended irrespective of small event or big. Despite, the organizing institutions have incurred huge financial loss, due to cancellation, they still have a greater moral responsibility on their shoulders. These organisations works in a syndicated manner. Given the networked nature of the global sport industry and its associated events sports can, in fact, bring together athletes, employees and fans to mitigate the problem and to raise the health awareness amongst people. A good public health system is needed to deal with an epidemic like COVID-19. The problem is further aggravated by the lack of health-related literacy among common people. Ventilator, facemask, sanitizers, and other medical equipment deficiencies in many countries have shown the direction for significant improvements, that is why the government machinery is now taking many drastic steps to further improve the health sector. A sound system is the collective effort of government policies and the active involvement of the citizen of the country. To make public health movement more effective for the practical implication governments need to give priority on raising the health awareness of the people and sportsmen or athletes play a great role in this endeavor. This paper assesses the role of sportsmen in improving the health awareness of the people during and post pandemic.

Index Terms - COVID-19, Pandemic, Athlete, Physical fitness, Health awareness, Prevention.

INTRODUCTION

It is rightly said, that “prevention is better than cure”. In this age of social media, sportsmen have a key role to play. News of inappropriate behaviour can spread very quickly, particularly when the behaviour evokes an emotional response. However, social media can also be leveraged to spread positive messages. During this pandemic, athletes like other celebrities can act as role models. They can encourage appropriate behaviour including social distancing, use of masks, sanitizers, distancing oneself from crowded places etc., to help to mitigate the spread of the virus through social media is much neglected but has great potential in fact. The general public has also become health conscious and more aware than before, awareness of yoga among the people has exponentially increased during the lockdown to remain stress less. Leading doctors and medical researchers are sharing their blogs, research outcomes in the newspapers, and also taking interactive sessions in electronic media. Before the attack of COVID-19, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) were an alarming issue for our health sector because NCDs are the leading causes of death and disability in India, which is a home to over 1.3 billion people with diabetes and hypertension prevalence of 7.3% and 28.9%, respectively. According to the research, the risk of becoming severely ill with the coronavirus appears to increase for those who are older (60 years and above). Coronaviruses mostly attack the victims of NCDs especially obesity and diabetes after knowing this people’s awareness of the health food intake is also increasing and surely if this disciplined lifestyle continues like this, then the number of patients of non-communicable diseases will decline in the future. In this direction, people are becoming more and more health conscious. Athletes

who train their physique, every day to excel in their respective sports field, are the right choice to create awareness about health awareness amongst people, as every person, by and large, is addicted or fond of watching or playing one or the other sports. Therefore, they look up to these athletes, with great pride and aspirations. These athletes will play a pre-dominant role in influencing the perception of a person and in boosting up their morale.

Ace Shuttler Pulela Gopichand once said that “If one did not invest in their physical well-being now, you would have to invest in hospitals later”. According to World Health Organisation, physical inactivity has been identified as the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality. Physical well-being can be viewed as a leading public health challenge around the world, as it is described as the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life. The number of scientific research outcomes has suggested that physical activities can be an effective means to control common non-communicable diseases, that is why majority of the doctors and exercise physiologists are stressed on a fair amount of physical activities in our daily life to remain fit and disease-free. If we are serious about physical activity since childhood, then we can remain fit and healthy until old age. School physical education (PE) is the only medium to engage students in various forms of physical activities, so the proper place of this subject is also very important in our education system. But the fact is the status of physical health and activity are not as good as it should be to combat non-communicable diseases, because many schools are not giving proper attention to physical education classes. Parents also need to understand the importance of physical education class and allow their children to take an active part in the activities. Half of the battle of an epidemic like COVID-19 can be won by having a strong physical fitness and health.

As major sport events have been cancelled and postponed in response to COVID-19. The negative consequences for all athletes in relation to the cancellation and postponement of such events during these fraught times need to be taken seriously. Absence of organized training and competition, lack of adequate communication between athletes and coaches, inability to move freely and inappropriate training conditions are negative consequences of

social isolation or quarantine. Staying in quarantine can have deleterious effects, not only on most physiological systems, but also in the players’ lives. In this scenario, it is therefore, extremely important to identify the effects and to understand the mechanisms and effects on all physiological systems, as well as their impact on athletic performance. Such sportsmen and athlete could be effectively used to create health awareness. It is definitely going to bring in win-win situation to all the stakeholders. It helps the athletes to come out of their boredom and depression. Their positive image and value are used to create awareness amongst the general public, who adore them like anything. Therefore, their services are much needed. In the absence of possibilities of face-to-face interaction, social media, could provide an effective platform to raise awareness. Narration and description of simple exercise, which could be performed at home itself, which will help in bringing physical fitness, will go a long way in addressing lot of health-related issues of the people. In fact, reductions in maximal and submaximal exercise performance occur within weeks after the cessation of training and losses in aerobic performance decrease cardiovascular function and muscle metabolic potential. Reduced or complete absence of strength training can also cause loss of muscle mass while periods of prolonged inactivity negatively affect the anti-gravitational muscle groups and the posterior extensor muscle chain. All athletes are facing this problem, to stay fit, they must continue to exercise, if not that rigorously. The methods they follow, the workouts they do at home, could be shared with millions of people through their twitter or Instagram as it would be a leading light to many, as they are more likely to trust information posted and thus share them. Athletes are perceived to possess positive character traits including perseverance and discipline. Due to constant visibility and appearance, they have also become public figures or personalities, as a result, many regards these sportsmen as their role models. Hence, they are expected to behave more responsibly, both on the court and off the court, as millions will be watching them and replicating their behavior.

Sportsmen can indeed set good examples for their fans and encourage appropriate attitude and behavior. celebrities can influence behaviour through normative influence. This is because there is a desire by others to emulate them. Hence, celebrities can share appropriate

behaviour and encourage the public to act responsibly through social media. Many athletes are already using social media to interact with their fans. These include sharing their training regimes, their activities with their families and friends, and their charity work. As such, it is easy for athletes to leverage on this medium and encourage appropriate behaviour from both their fans and the public during this pandemic. As athletes are perceived to be fit and healthy, messages that they post on health-related matters will be deemed more credible and convincing than the average celebrity. Athletes can thus make a difference in this fight against COVID-19.

CONCLUSION

Narration and description of simple exercise, which could be performed at home itself, which will help in bringing physical fitness, will go a long way in addressing lot of health-related issues of the people. Infact, reductions in maximal and submaximal exercise performance occur within weeks after the cessation of training and losses in aerobic performance decrease cardiovascular function and muscle metabolic potential. The methods they follow, the workouts they do at home, could be shared with millions of people through their twitter or Instagram as it would be a leading light to many, as they are more likely to trust information posted and thus share them. Athletes are perceived to possess positive character traits including perseverance and discipline. Sportsmen can indeed set good examples for their fans and encourage appropriate attitude and behavior. celebrities can influence behaviour through normative influence. As athletes are perceived to be fit and healthy, messages that they post on health-related matters will be deemed more credible and convincing than the average celebrity. Athletes can thus make a difference in this fight against COVID-19.

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