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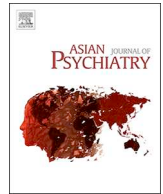
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Letter to the Editor

Fear of COVID 2019: First suicidal case in India !



The novel coronavirus 2019 currently designated as COVID 2019 is in the limelight since the beginning of New Year 2020 ([Key considerations for repatriation and quarantine of travellers in relation to the outbreak of novel coronavirus, 2020](#), WHO, 2020). Though human coronaviruses have been recognised for many years but COVID 2019 was a new strain and its wide global spread sparked panic among the common public ([Human Coronavirus Types, 2020](#), CDC, 2020). Owing to the lack of immunity to this new strain of coronavirus, a large number of people at large are susceptible to it.

Various alarming video clippings featuring COVID 2019 are in circulation on social media and being accessed by almost all individuals through their smartphones/ computers in developing countries ([Coronavirus, 2020](#), Telegraph, 2020). In India, the first suicidal case by a 50 year old man was reported from a village in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh on 12th Feb 2020. He was a father-of-three who was informed by his doctor that he had contracted some viral illness which he wrongly correlated to COVID 2019 as he was constantly obsessed with the videos where Chinese victims were shown to collapse in public and suspected patients were forced into health care facilities for quarantine against their will. He was so disturbed that in order to protect his family, he quarantined himself and pelted stones on his family and friends when they tried to approach him. Later due to his fear and panic that he had acquired COVID 2019, he ended his life by hanging himself from a tree ([Fearing he had contracted coronavirus, man locks family, kills himself, 2020](#), Hindustan Times, 2020).

In an era of internet and technology, social media should have in-built algorithms which can automatically block video clippings from being uploaded at commonly accessed social networking sites which creates panic among the general public. Countries should have laws in place where forwarding of such sensational videos should be made punishable and such videos should be banned. Thus, social media should be a platform to disseminate the right education among the public so that everyone can enjoy the social media in a positive sense. During political turmoil in India, the Government puts a ban on internet services but strict and rapid action must be taken when unauthorized alarming videos are circulated related to public health issues ([India's Internet shutdown in Kashmir is the longest ever in a democracy, 2020](#), Washington Post, 2020).

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