

## COVID-19 and Alcohol Consumption: No Preventive or Therapeutic Benefits

Dear Editor,

The ongoing coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) outbreak has crossed all the geographical boundaries and has affected individuals, households, societies, and nations at large in all possible domains. To date, a total of 1,991,562 cases and 130,885 deaths have been reported, amounting to a case fatality rate of 6.57%.<sup>[1]</sup>

Alcohol has been linked with the development of multiple illnesses and social consequences, like a rise in the incidence of injuries and different forms of violence. As social distancing has been identified as the most effective mode of reducing the spread of the transmission, many nations have imposed lockdown to interrupt the chain of transmission. COVID-19, which is a novel infection, has already aggravated stress and anxiety, but with lockdown, due to the interruption in the daily routine, the problem of mental health issues has significantly increased. However, if all these problems are coupled with alcohol consumption, there is an enhanced risk of high-risk behavior, the development of mental issues, violence, and the possibility that people won't adhere to the recommendation of staying indoors.<sup>[2]</sup>

During these difficult times of COVID-19 pandemic, a number of myths have been circulating among the masses, like consumption of alcohol will destroy the virus or kill the virus in the air or that alcohol stimulates immunity and, thus, enhances resistance to the virus. However, in reality all these are baseless statements and it is important to spread the message that consumption of alcohol does not protect anyone from acquiring the infection and thus should be discouraged in all forms of consumption. Moreover, it is important to remember that drinking alcohol does not reduce stress, and instead of that we can try for an indoor workout or some other stress-relieving strategies (like listening to music or yoga or some form of physical activity).<sup>[2]</sup>

The imposition of lockdown is an effective strategy to ensure that alcohol access can be restricted and no relaxation of existing regulations for selling alcohol should be done.<sup>[2]</sup> Even the government should take appropriate steps to reduce alcohol consumption and close all bars/clubs and ensure social distancing even in the retail shops. Further, the general population should be informed about the risks linked with alcohol and how they can further magnify in the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, people should be encouraged to utilize this lockdown period as an opportunity to quit tobacco and only access the trusted source of information for getting insights about the disease.<sup>[2]</sup>

In conclusion, the consumption of alcohol neither prevents the acquisition of COVID-19 infection, nor aids in any way in the treatment of the condition. Thus, it is the

responsibility of the public health authorities to ensure that all myths about alcohol are discouraged and its access during the pandemic is restricted.

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### Conflicts of interest

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**Saurabh RamBihariLal Shrivastava,  
Prateek Saurabh Shrivastava<sup>1</sup>**

*Member of the Medical Education Unit and Institute Research Council, Department of Community Medicine, Shri Sathya Sai Medical College and Research Institute, Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth – Deemed to be University, Ammapettai, Nellikuppam, Chengalpaet District, Tamil Nadu, India, <sup>1</sup>Department of Community Medicine, Shri Sathya Sai Medical College and Research Institute, Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth – Deemed to be University, Ammapettai, Nellikuppam, Chengalpaet District, Tamil Nadu, India*

### Address for correspondence:

*Dr. Saurabh RamBihariLal Shrivastava,  
Professor, Department of Community Medicine, Shri Sathya Sai Medical College and Research Institute, Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth (SBV) – Deemed to be University, Tiruporur - Guduvancherry Main Road, Ammapettai, Nellikuppam, Chengalpaet District - 603 108, Tamil Nadu, India.  
Email: drshrishri2008@gmail.com*

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