

Waves of Tragedies—A Plea for Justice

As the pandemic-ravaged country reeled under the second wave of COVID-19, India was struck with yet another calamity—one entirely created by the masses. With several families living in fear of losing their loved ones, chaos emerged/reigned supreme within the country. The healthcare system, especially, took a strong blow with a surplus influx of patients from all parts of India. The doctors tending to these patients were subject to heavy abuse from their families and, in some cases, were even brutally beaten to their untimely death. These families often lashed out at the doctors from frustration due to the assumption that inadequate attention or improper care were being given to the patient.

A recent survey by the Indian Medical Association shows that over 80% of doctors feel stressed out in their profession. Around 46% of their stress is caused due to the fear of violence. Furthermore, 56% of doctors do not receive sufficient sleep due to their profession. Most importantly, due to the recent surge of cases, doctors have been under more stress than ever, which triggers fear among those in the next generation, possibly discouraging them from pursuing this taxing career. [[1](#)]



Doctors clad in PPE kits, treating a patient in the Covid wards. (Image Credits: bbc.com)

Several harrowing events broke out in all parts of the country. A doctor working at a medical facility at Hojai, located in Assam, was captured on tape being assaulted by a mob. The patient had supposedly passed away due to COVID complications which riled up the crowd to ransack the hospital. As the staff fled for safety, the doctor locked himself up in a room in the hopes of hiding from the mob. However, he was found and thrashed with metal trash cans and bricks, injuring him severely. [2]

Doctors were also beaten and harassed by the police. Dr Maqbool, a senior Kashmiri doctor, was on his way to the hospital when he was stopped by a policeman and asked to take a different route. Even after showing his ID card, the policeman did not let him through, threatening to strip him naked. After the doctor filed a complaint, the police pinned the blame on him, stating that he was allegedly manhandling them. However, Dr Maqbool stood bravely by his word and demanded just behaviour from the court. [3]

Adding to the burdens faced by the doctors, politicians have also been playing a part in making their lives harder, propagating acts of violence against healthcare workers. PC Sharma, a Congress legislator, berated Dr Yogendra

Shrivastava, a senior doctor from Madhya Pradesh. After witnessing the misconduct of the Congress MLA, Dr Shrivastava applied for resignation. However, this prompted responses from many other politicians, and even the Health Minister of MP, who was resolute in bringing justice to him. AIIMS, Delhi drafted a heartfelt letter to what the doctor had witnessed, in response to his situation. [4]



Doctors in IMA and FAIMA protesting outside AIIMS, Delhi. (Image Credits: Times of India)

On 18th June 2021, the Indian Medical Association (IMA) organised a nationwide protest against the recent surge of violence against doctors reported across the country. It also served as an awareness campaign wherein healthcare professionals wore black masks, ribbons, shirts, and badges. The purpose of this protest was to demand a central law that protects medics from workplace violence. [5] With the slogan 'Save the Survivors', lakhs of doctors from various medical organisations participated in an endeavour to increase security and label hospitals as protected zones. One of the demands was to have a non-bailable law against perpetrators of physical violence, with a ten-year minimum punishment. [6]

The projection of healthcare workers by the media creates a

colossal difference in the way the masses perceive doctors. The staff must be compliant to deal with frustrated patients and the healthcare premises must be well-guarded to prevent such tragedies from happening. However, as several states prepare for what will likely be a deadlier third wave, it is important to understand that healthcare workers risk their lives every day in order to ensure their patient's well being. With resources, patience, and endurance stretched thin, there is only so much that the rapidly crumbling healthcare system can withstand.

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