



Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

New Delhi, India. London, UK. Accra, Ghana

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NGO with Special Consultative Status with the Economic & Social Council of the United Nations

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To
Ms. Vandana Gugnani
Additional Secretary,
Ministry Of Health
New Delhi

Sub: Opening health care facilities for non-COVID patients

Dear Ms. Gugnani:

As you know, in the wake of the pandemic, many hospitals have either shut their OPD services or attend to COVID-19 related matters only, where these have been so designated. However, many people who have not been infected by COVID-19 would still require consultation with their doctors. Tele-medicine facilities have been instituted only by a small number of specialised health care facilities.

Many individuals need to consult medical practitioners for routine health care advice or monitoring of their health condition, all of which cannot be done through telephone or video conferencing. The impact of the lockdown on underprivileged individuals and families without smartphones to avail such services during emergencies is even more acute.

We have come across multiple instances of police personnel preventing non-COVID-19 infected individuals requiring medical consultation from visiting hospitals that are open, under the pretext of enforcing the lockdown.

We completely agree that it is highly inadvisable to overburden hospitals and medical professionals who are heroically handling COVID-19 emergencies with such routine cases. However, we believe that, given the GoI's new guidelines for the phased initiation of industrial and economic activity that it is also urgent that arrangements be made to open public and private health care facilities, clinics and dispensaries in a phased manner. This would enable people to avail consultation and treatment for routine matters and non-COVID related emergencies.

Yours sincerely,

Wajahat Habibullah
Chairperson, CHRI

Sanjoy Hazarika
International Director, CHRI