

'Treat patients with mild or no symptom at home'

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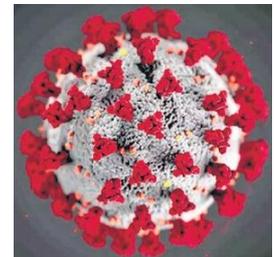


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By ANUJA SUSAN VARGHESE
Express News Service

KOCHI: With the number of coronavirus cases going up steadily in the state — 168 in the last two days alone — and thousands of NRKs set to return, one worrying question could be 'are our Covid hospitals going to be full soon'. And experts say 'Yes'. They find the spike worrying and fear that, at the present rate, things could lead to a situation where serious patients may have to be turned away from hospitals. They want the state to adopt a strategy to treat those patients who are asymptomatic or showing mild symptoms by isolating them in their own homes.

Kerala reported 82 cases on Wednesday — 53 of whom returned from abroad and 19 from other states and the rest through contact — taking the total number of infected persons so far to 1,494. More alarmingly, from 16 active cases on May 7, the patients' number has increased to 832 now. Going by the current rate of infection, the number may touch 2,000 by the end of this month. Experts believe it is time the state government thought of revising its treatment policy.



Dr Joseph K, Consultant, Internal Medicine and Diabetology at VPS Lakeshore, said: "There is no need to panic in the present situation as all confirmed cases are being treated at Covid hospitals in the state. But the situation can change soon with the number of cases

going up. As of now, private hospitals are not being utilised by the government. Once that option also gets exhausted with patients filling their facilities to capacity, the Health Department will have to reconsider its policy.

'Home isolation can have grave consequences'

“Home isolation , for asymptomatic cases and those with mild symptoms, is a viable option in Kerala, if the situation demands it. However, proper healthchecks should be ensured and trained healthcare workers made available to monitor patients treated at homes,” said Joseph. Home isolation for asymptomatic/ mild cases, however, carries the added risk of family members getting infected which, in turn, may further spike the number of patients. “Home isolation can have grave consequences if not closely monitored. It will succeed only if there is someone to take care of the individual by administering proper and timely medication and giving food.

To maintain emotional and psychological well-being, television and Internet should also be assured. Otherwise, there are high chances of patients violating home quarantine and infecting more people,” said Dr Joseph. Indian Medical Association President Dr Abraham Varghese said isolating and treating asymptomatic patients at home would be highly risky. “We are risking the health of an entire family if the patient is asymptomatic. A situation where hospitals getting filled to capacity and running out of treatment options for patients will not arise in Kerala.

As of now, it's worrying that more and more healthcare workers are testing positive. It's an alarming situation,” said Dr Varghese. As per the Directorate of Health Service's data, the state government had wanted to make 5,669 isolation beds ready as part of its contingency plan choked out in April for treating Covid patients and divided them into Plan A, B and C, depending on the severity of the crisis. As per Plan A, 1,216 isolation beds spreading across 50 government hospitals and two private hospitals were readied. Of these, 832 have already been already occupied. Plan B will have another 1,425 beds by including 55 private and 71 government hospitals.

In case the situation spirals out of control, Plan C, involving 81 government and 41 private hospitals and which together will have 3028 beds, will be activated. There are indications that the state might seek the services of 55 private hospitals soon if cases spike at the current rate. Sources told TNIE that the Ernakulam district collector has already ordered hospitals, including MOSC Medical College Hospital, Kolencherry, Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences and Aster Medcity (both in Kochi) to be ready with isolation facilities.

Aadujeevitham crew member tests Covid +ve

Kozhikode: One of the crew members of the Pritviraj-starrer Aadujeevitham tested positive for Covid on Wednesday. An Arabic teacher, the 58-year-old Pandikkad native had joined the shooting in Jordan as a translator. After returning to Kochi on a special

evacuation flight on May 22, he was under observation at a Covid care centre at Changaramkulam. After testing positive, he was shifted to the Manjeri Medical College Hospital.

KERALA CASE DIARY

82cases reported on Wednesday

832 under treatment

651 have recovered so far

1,494 cases have been confirmed so far

11 DEATHS