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**SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH**  
India Research Center



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## **‘Partnerships to Advance Public Health and the Economy in the COVID-19 Era’**

- Webinar co-hosted by Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health - India Research Center, Piramal Foundation & Project SANCHAR
- Global eminent panelists highlighted the importance of collaboration to tackle the pandemic and safeguard communities

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### **India | June 26, 2020, Friday:**

“India must spend 5% of its GDP on healthcare - this is critical in the long run, as we need to be able to take care of our population,” said Mr. Amitabh Kant, CEO of NITI Aayog at a global webinar on COVID-19 pandemic jointly organized by Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health and the Piramal Foundation. This webinar brought together thought leaders from across various industries such as science, philanthropy, government and business to discuss issues to consider as India opens up its economy while still managing the COVID-19 crisis. The panelists included **Mr. Amitabh Kant**, CEO, NITI Aayog, **Dr. Swati Piramal**, Vice Chairperson, Piramal Group, **Dr. Howard Koh**, Harvey V. Fineberg Professor of the Practice of Public Health Leadership, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and **Dr. Naveen Rao**, Senior Vice President - Health Initiatives, The Rockefeller Foundation. The webinar was moderated by **Shereen Bhan**, Managing Editor, CNBC TV18.

In the opening address of the webinar **Dr. Michelle A. Williams, Dean of the Faculty, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health**, highlighted the importance of strategic partnerships and collaborations to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic as economies open up, along with protecting public health.

During the webinar, **Mr. Amitabh Kant, CEO, NITI Aayog**, said, “I am a long term believer in the fact that for India, preventive care at the grass-root level is important..” He further added that NITI Aayog works in close partnership with Piramal Foundation on the Aspirational Districts Program in 112 districts across 28 states in the country. Based on convergence, collaboration and competition, the Aspirational District Program is perhaps the largest experiment on outcome-focused governance in the world.

Emphasizing on the growing importance of technology to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, **Padma Shri Dr. Swati Piramal, Vice Chairperson, Piramal Group**, said, “We need to leverage technology including artificial intelligence, to get over the pandemic, be it vaccinations, mobile units or tackling co-morbidities - in every case, innovation, information technology and science will make a huge difference.”

Dr. Howard Koh, who served as the **14<sup>th</sup> Assistant Secretary for Health, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services** and was in office during the 2009 H1N1 pandemic, said, “This global pandemic requires

a global response. Focusing on the long term is critical. We need everybody involved, especially the private businesses and healthcare sectors.”

As a key takeaway from the discussion, **Dr. Naveen Rao, Senior Vice President, Health Initiative, The Rockefeller Foundation**, said, “We need to understand & appreciate as a community, that healthcare workers are our true heroes. It is our responsibility to give them the requisite tools, due recognition, security & housing. We are as strong as our front-line workers.”

The webinar concluded with closing remarks from **Dr. K. Viswanath, Lee Kum Kee Professor of Health Communication, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and Director, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health - India Research Center**. The webinar was hosted as part of a webinar series "**COVID-19 Outbreak: On the Frontlines**" curated by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health - India Research Center and Project SANCHAR.

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**The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health - India Research Center**

As the first global Center of the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health, the India Research Center facilitates partnership between public health researchers and Harvard Chan faculty. Learn more at: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/india-center/about-the-center/>

**About Piramal Foundation**

Piramal Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Piramal Group is a Section 8 company that develops innovative solutions to resolve issues that are critical roadblocks towards unlocking India's economic potential. The Foundation currently works across 25 Indian states and has impacted over 112 million lives, mostly in partnership with central & state governments. Know more at: <https://piramalfoundation.org>

**Project SANCHAR**

Project SANCHAR, or Science and News: Communicating Health And Research, one of the initiatives of the India Research Center, is aimed at building the capacity of journalists who report on health to draw on the latest science and data. Learn more at: <https://projectsanchar.org>