



DID WE STEER CLEAR OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS AMIDST THE WRATH OF A PANDEMIC? – A VIEWPOINT

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Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the normal pace of life and no person is immune to its effects. But the world is running a race to find the cure for it. This pandemic is a challenge for consumers, companies and governments. But COVID-19 is not the only problem that hampered our lives this year. The climate crisis took a toll on us as too. Unlike COVID-19, the climate crisis does not have a cure, until and unless we change our ways of life. This paper is a viewpoint on how we have steered clear of the climate crisis and diverted our focus completely towards the pandemic.

Index terms- COVID-19, Climate Crisis

INTRODUCTION

The year 2020 was beyond imaginable. The COVID 19 pandemic disrupted the normal pace of life thereby giving rise to the term “new normal”. COVID 19 stole the thunder of every other problem persisting and any article and research paper published this year has been focused on the pandemic. Searching online databases like Google Scholar or PubMed using the keyword “COVID 19” results in approximately eighty thousand to over one lakh publications related to the pandemic ^[1]. This has created a perception that the pandemic is the only major crisis faced by the world this year. Aiming all our focus on COVID 19, we abandoned the most important problem existing, which is Climate change. It is equally important to highlight the various natural disasters and calamities that have occurred this year.

PRIORITIZING THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Starting with the Australian Bushfires, Indonesian flash floods, Philippines volcano eruption, Swarms of Locusts in Africa, India and the Middle East, Cyclone Amphan in Bangladesh, Assam floods, California wildfires, the Antarctica Green Snow and many more ^[2]. These disasters are proof of the worsening climatic conditions and the impact of humans on nature. Apart from this, the rise in global temperatures, melting of the ice caps, global warming, rising sea levels are all evidence of the deteriorating climatic conditions ^[3]. These events have led to widespread changes in precipitation amounts, wind patterns and extreme weather conditions including drought, heavy rainfall, heatwaves and intensity of tropical cyclones evident from the examples mentioned above.

Haven't we always been hearing that the world works on evidence-based practices? Then why are we not doing anything when we have so much evidence related to the changing climate in the form of natural calamities? Every policy, law, action plan, national programs are designed based on this evidence-based practice and the same applies to the actions being taken against climate change as well. Are we just compromising to live with these conditions? When will the change begin? Are we not acting fast enough?

When COVID 19 hit the world, the race began to find the vaccine ^[4]. This is probably the first time in history that the scientific community has worked at such a rapid pace to find the solution to a problem. However, the same cannot be said about the climate crisis. Action against this crisis began as early as 1992 with the "United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change", the "Kyoto Protocol" (1995), the "Paris Agreement" (2015) and so on. Yet the year 2019 was recorded as the second warmest year of the decade (2010-2019) and the levels of Carbon Dioxide and other green-house gases rose to new records ^[5]. We do not have a vaccine for the pandemic yet but we do have solutions for the climate crisis.

DISCUSSION

The use of public transport, shifting to recyclable materials, building more green cities, walking on foot, reducing the use of fossil fuels and planting more trees are some of the solutions already proposed to halt the catastrophic impacts of climate change. Newer innovations and technologies are constantly being developed to tackle this crisis. However, these solutions are yet to have a considerate impact in controlling the crisis. Therefore, there is a need to focus on the implementation and utilization of these solutions and identify what is stopping in making these minor changes that will have a long-term impact on our lives as well as the planet.

CONCLUSION

We do not have to wait for a problem to conquer us all as in the case of COVID 19. We can start by taking steps even now to prevent a global catastrophe due to climate change. In the end, we have to realize that we are not "immune" to climate change and there is no vaccine that will prevent this.

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