

Transcript of Sridhar Venkatapuram on Ethics

What are the different ways that different societies have dealt with the ethics of this pandemic and it would take me days to talk about all the different kinds of ethical issues that have been raised but overwhelmingly, I think, the kind of overwhelming unanimous response is no society has dealt with this pandemic in an ethical or what we'd say the best ethical way possible And there's numerous reasons to this.

One is that when we think about ethics, we think about in terms of what is the right thing to do as an individual, as a society, as a group, and as a human community I think that we have a lot of different kinds of failures here Perhaps most important of all, we have to recognise that thousands of people have died. At least in the UK, more than 27,000 people have died, and in UK, France, Italy, Spain, and then also in the United States, so these are not tragic deaths, these are not deaths that were going to happen anyway. These were preventable deaths that could have where people could have lived on average as the statisticians are telling us, about ten years longer And this pandemic was created by human interactions and neglect, starting from the outbreak, in terms of how it started, and why it started, to the way it spread to different countries and also the natural experiment in which different societies chose to run different policies and then resulted in different numbers of deaths and different kinds of suffering as a result of the lockdown all shows you all the different kinds of not only scientific decisions, that were made, but also ethical decisions about whose lives do we save, what do we consider as important, what do we not consider as valuable and I think that there's an enormous number of ethical issues in front of us now, starting from how do we treat each other to how do societies treat each other and how do we deal with this global interdependence that makes us vulnerable, but also, we also know that the worst off in our societies and in the world actually are now linked to us in a very direct way.

Do we build walls between them and us to protect us? Or do we make an effort to improve their health so that all of our health is secure, not only for this virus but the coming more epidemics and more pandemics that will come and try to make societies in the world a much more resilient sort of, human population towards lots of different kinds of threats. One, we have to really pay attention to the inequities and injustice that have emanated from this pandemic. It's not just a biological phenomenon, it's not just a tragedy it's not just a, sort of, humanitarian crisis.

This is very much a socially created crisis, as people, as many of you know, who work on social determinant's of health understand, is that health inequalities during normal times are actually profoundly determined by social choices and social policies and whether we pay attention to certain people or we don't, whether we allow certain kinds of harms to continue or we don't, this pandemic was also created by various kinds of social choices How countries agree or disagree regarding different kinds of coordination attempts. What sort of oversight that countries have over other countries operations or various kinds of health risks How do we communicate in emergencies and so forth but also at a national level, the kinds of transparency, the kind of democratic principles, the different kinds of information, the investments in public health infrastructure, the safety nets of the most vulnerable All of these are profoundly important to consider and so we need to do that more than ever now .

This is not simply a one-off event. We have been going this for about three months now and we're going go through this for another year or more and definitely our society has change, our global society has changed.

Now the question is whether we are going to observe, just watch these things or whether we're going to engage and actively transform those factors that put us in this place, and got us here in the first place. I think this is one of the most important points, and pivot points in recent history for us as societies and as the world. This is a moment where that we can retrench everything that was bad, say like the 2008 recession when everything was essentially all about how we got the economy growing and toxic economy that was allowed to spread, or do we think about this now as one more risk that has destroyed thousand of people, millions of people are suffering, and use it as a pivot point in order to build better societies and really make an effort at the idea of social equity and global equity, because before it was the right thing to do, but right now our future lives depend on it