

KU VC inaugurates webinar series on ‘Covid-19 and Mental Health’

Resilience, coping strategies will help combat ill-effects of pandemic, say experts

Srinagar, Nov 28: Vice-Chancellor of University of Kashmir Prof Talat Ahmad Saturday urged academics to extend all-out support to their students to cope with the psychological impact of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Addressing as chief guest an inter-institutional webinar series titled ‘Covid19 and Mental Health’, Prof Talat said it was important for teachers to extend their full support to the student community in adjusting to “the new normal” and coping with the ill-effects of the pandemic, particularly on their mental health.

The webinar series has been organised by the varsity’s UGC-Human Resource Development Centre (UGC-HRDC) in collaboration with Government Degree College Pampore and Department of Biotechnology, Central University of Kashmir.

Chairing the inaugural session, Prof Talat said: “We need to honour the centuries-old practices and invaluable tools that are woven into the country’s culture and can be used by young students to deal with anxiety and stress amid this disruption”.

He also impressed upon students to go for frequent exercising, take adequate rest and interact freely with their friends and relatives.

The VC said the National Education Policy-2020 has underlined education as a ‘great leveler’ and to protect this promise for the current generation, it is imperative to help students and their families to deal with anxiety, stress and loss that the current pandemic has brought.

Director UGC-HRDC Prof Shabir Ahmad Bhat underscored the role of leadership in difficult situations.

COVID-19 has wreaked havoc across the world and there is hardly any aspect of life that has remained unaffected, he said, adding that the pandemic has caused a devastating impact on the mental health of people.

“It’s in this context that such webinars are important to help foster the ability of individuals to find courage and meaning amidst trying circumstances and enhance their ability to transcend adversity and emerge stronger,” Prof Bhat said.

Dr Samia Rashid, Principal and Dean Government Medical College Srinagar—the Guest of Honour—presented a detailed overview of measures required to combat the ill-effects of Covid19, particularly on the mental health of people.

She called for a continued management of patients suffering from mental health issues through tele-medicine, while avoiding any disruptions in the supply chain through proper planning.

“There is a pressing need to address the mental health support needs of special and vulnerable populations like elderly people, patients with disabilities, marginalised communities and people living in remote areas,”

Dr Samia said.

Dr Arshad Hussain, Professor at Department of Psychiatry, GMC Srinagar, delivered the first lecture of the webinar series.

“A measured dose of fear is an absolutely normal emotion to prepare ourselves for a catastrophe like COVID-19, but we shouldn’t be so overwhelmed by the fear that we start doing irrational things,” he said, reiterating that resilience and coping strategies are important in countering the ill-effects of a pandemic of this magnitude.

Dr Arshad assured his support to reach out to the teachers working in colleges and universities to train them in cultivating such coping strategies and help their students to navigate through the pandemic. The lecture was attended by teachers from KU, CUK and GDC Pampore.

Dr Seema Naz, Principal GDC Pampore and Dr Abid Hamid from CUK’s Department of Biotechnology also spoke on the theme of the webinar.

Dr Geer Mohammad Ishaq, Coordinator UGC-HRDC at KU, conducted and coordinated the webinar, while Dr Abid Hamid from CUK and Dr Mir Ashiq Hussain from GDC Pampore delivered vote of thanks.
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