



Book review: Till We Win - India's Fight against the COVID-19 Pandemic

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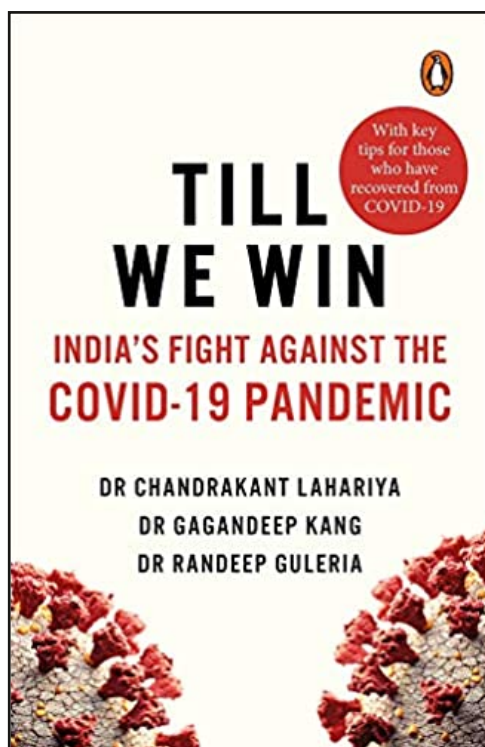
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This is a narrative of hope, with a scientific and humane perspective in pandemic times...

There are many reports on COVID-19 being published every day, so when I picked up this book, I told myself to make sure to look out for what is different about this one. Within the first few pages itself, I got my

answer. I realized that 'Till We Win' is a unique book - it offers hope to humanity, puts science first, and focuses on the opportunities to improve health systems in this crisis. And nothing is more welcome than hope and opportunities in these troubled times.

There are four sections to the book. The

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first section demystifies and brings clarity to the pandemic situation. The description of the microorganisms and the COVID-19 pathogenesis in a simple and interesting manner helps the reader to fathom the true nature of the disease. It sets the foundation for the following sections which build further understanding of COVID-19 and its control. Even as this section mentions that pandemics are inevitable, it also gives the message that we must be ready to fight back by planning and developing strategies to do so. It removes the room for any complacency or wishful thinking.

The second section provides a powerful narrative on the pandemic response in the Indian context at various levels. The national level strategies, the state level responses and experiences, and the brave fight put up by the healthcare workers at their individual levels gives a comprehensive overview of the expectations and delivery at each level. My favourite chapter in this section is 'The undaunted human spirit' which gives a human face to the struggle of the healthcare workers in managing this global crisis. Chapters such as 'Contribution from every walk of life' move one and inspire each one of us to hold fort in such critical and unprecedented times.

The third section offers some certainty in these uncertain times. There was no known treatment of COVID-19 when the pandemic hit the world. There was a pressure on the scientific community to deliver solutions. The scientific community strongly responded by conducting and disseminating research. The research from all domains of health science such as epidemiology, molecular biology, clinical medicine, health systems research, and vaccinology moved at breakneck speed to evolve preventive measures to reduce transmission rates and to reduce morbidity and mortality amongst the COVID-19 affected. The therapies which emerged, the rationale behind it, and then the progress stories of vaccines make

for an enriching read especially for all those working in the field of health. The question-answer technique used in this section and in the next section is appreciated. It makes the reading interesting and the understanding more efficient.

The last section sets the tone for the future. It highlights the learning lessons for health systems as well as for individuals. It celebrates crisis by holding up the achievements in this pandemic-related struggle. The various suggestions such as concept of neighbourhood clinics, population norms for health centres, health financing, data-based management, and others give ready-made tips for public health advocates and policy makers. It can benefit all aspects of healthcare at the community level.

Let me next mention what the book is not about. It is not a textbook of clinical medicine which it never intended to be, and so it does not provide clinical guidelines about managing COVID-19 patients in inpatient department or intensive care unit settings.

This book is about the public health response to the pandemic through the collaborative and coordinated efforts of health systems, governments, and local communities. It focuses on the COVID-19 prevention and control strategies. It identifies the strengths and challenges of our country's health systems. I recommend translating this book into other languages as it has the potential to penetrate and guide local health systems in outbreak preparedness.

This book is easy to read, it busts myths surrounding COVID-19, it identifies the strengths and challenges of our country's health systems, and it proposes learning lessons from this whole experience. But above all, it is a book on hope in science and in humanity.

I would recommend this book for all those who have the potential to influence health behaviour and health policy. More specifically for teachers, journalists, public health activists, medical students, faculty members of medical and health institutions, political leaders, and members of community-based health organizations. The

authors deserve appreciation for not only contributing to the book, but also for their efforts in combating COVID-19 in our country.

As I put this book down, I know that I will be referring to it again.
