

### Editor's Desk



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### MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS IN HEALTHCARE AND OUR ROLE IN DEBUNKING AND DEMYSTIFYING

*Science must begin with myths and with the criticism of myths-----Karl popper*

It is mundane knowledge that in our professional activities we are exposed to wide-ranging myths associated with health and illnesses on a daily basis. Myths are false beliefs/information, partial or wholesome, distorted, misstated, or misrepresented fudged facts. This has transcended from generation to generation and is sometimes headline-grabbing. When truths are frozen, myths are born. Myths generate curiosity and reality generates boredom. There are a lot of myths, especially in Health Care in diagnosis, diet, drugs, culture, and environment, etc. These myths are espoused by many, sometimes we unwittingly propagate particularly by conspiracy theorists. Its pervasive capacity is facilitated by social media, Electronic media, and village gossip. On televisions, there are a lot of false promises, and advertisements for cures for cancer, HIV, hair growth, etc. by informal persons without scientific evidence. Its phenomenology is like a story without an author which is untrue.

This has various aliases like old-wives tales, folktales, fairytales, etc. Myths inflict immense damage to health-seeking behaviors leading to late diagnosis and management with poor prognosis for what is easily manageable otherwise. These are more prevalent in less educated, rural population and is said to be more common in females and is more contagious. Some even believe that illnesses are generated as a result of past sins leading to a spiritual therapy approach. Anti-vaxxers during the COVID vaccination program caused immense damage to its image. Among the multitude of medical myths, we can enumerate some like Chicken pox is treated with turmeric and neem paste, which is a result of goddess Sakthi's wrath leading to spiritual treatment with a sorcerer.

Excess sugar leads to diabetes, it occurs only in old age, Honey is good for diabetes, starvation diet for weight loss, cracking knuckles leads to arthritis, MMR vaccination causes Autism, bottled water is better than tap water, Flu shots give you the Flu, use of multivitamin over a normal healthy diet, give an iron implement to be grabbed by hand during a seizure episode, bowel cleansing and detox, etc. are well recognizable. Unregulated and unauthenticated media advertisements about wild claims are another saga we are forced to tide over. We can recognize that various myths and misconceptions have played a great role in a particular patient by their late arrival, poor state of health, and own admission. We as professionals should identify, educate and debunk these myths pervading society by counseling and explaining. Tireless patient and population education goes a long way to ease and minimize these myths. In social media like Whatsapp, the myths spread faster than the facts.



## *The Medical **Bulletin***

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It is the health care person's responsibility to counteract those false messages, and fables and take time to explain to the patients the ill effects of believing that information.

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