



In the Era of COVID-19

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Opinion

In the days of pandemic episodes people life is greatly disturbed from all its aspects. Health issues might represent the main to be considered, however economic affairs are not of less consideration and COVID-19 drastic financial catastrophic impact is a clear outstanding example. It is also important to recognize other aspects related to the pandemic drawbacks as the social and mental problems which might start a bit later but continue for longer period and are of greater economic and catastrophic impact. It is said that pandemic is always followed by wide-wars and this is not a far unexpected possibility from our recent pandemic.

Another big new issue is the 'social media impact on human behavior' which was not present in previous pandemics we read about in history including the Spanish pandemic in the 20s of the previous centuries. Despite the multiple positive beneficial effect of the social media in the era of social distancing, too many negative rumors flourish in epidemic time. Some of these false news and advices might be harmful and form a great obstacle in controlling diseases. In Iraq, as in many the developing countries, large sector of the population did not believe that the epidemic exists and denies its drastic impact. The effect of such denial carries high risky impact in the application of the preventive strategies and Corona virus propagation.

Next important issue is the impact on financial resources for almost all population which results in a serious global recession that halter the people compliance with the control measures as they can weaken strategies of COVID-19 control and lead to more morbidity health needs at global level. These disastrous problems carry longstanding adverse effect even after lockdown release and epidemic end. The expected known reasons for non-compliance include economic reasons in addition to the prolonged block down duration, rumors, wrong social media messages and ignorance. Each of these factors needs extensive exploration and study to put down strategies to regain public compliance.

This outbreak is leading massive global morbidity and mortality in addition to other health problems such as impaired vaccination coverage of children with EPI program vaccines that will result in outbreaks of measles and other fatal pediatric diseases and retardation in poliomyelitis eradication. Additionally, mental health effect will shows in the form of anxiety, stress, depressive symptoms, insomnia, denial, anger and fear affecting all humanity.

The pandemic started in December 2019, after the outbreak of a new coronavirus infection (COVID-19) among humans in Wuhan (China), extending to a major threat to global health. Global media, local and international health organizations (including World Health Organization) epidemiologists, virologists and opinion-makers put out information, recommendations minute-by-minute updates on COVID-19 propagation and lethality. Nevertheless, the burden of this infection on the global mental health is currently postponed or even neglected even if it may challenge patients, general population, as well as policy makers and health organizations. The city of Wuhan in China was in the spotlight since December 2019 because of the outbreak of a febrile respiratory syndrome due to a pneumonia caused by a new unknown coronavirus [1] that was possibly linked to a wholesale seafood market in Huanan [2].

Chinese health authorities, although blamed for possible delayed in notification, have employed rapid public health measures, including intensive surveillance, epidemiological investigation including closure of the markets and of affected cities lateron January 1, 2020 [1]. The previous experience with severe acute respiratory syndrome due to coronavirus (SARS-CoV), Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome due to coronavirus (MERS-CoV), avian influenza and other common respiratory viruses (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020) helped in the application of the needed strategies. Laboratory investigations ruled out these known viral causes and proved that the causative agent was genuinely a new virus belonging to Corona virus family. The new

coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2, initially named 2019-nCoV) has been isolated from a patient in a short time on January 7, 2020, and the genome sequencing of this virus was performed [4]. The genetic sequence of SARS-CoV-2 has been officially recognized by World Health Organization (WHO) on January 12, 2020, and this has led to the development of specific polymerase chain reaction PCR-based diagnostic tests to detect the new infection in different countries [5]. SARS-CoV-2, previously indicated as an unknown beta-coronavirus, is the seventh member of coronaviruses' family which infects humans, different from both MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV, SARS-CoV-2 [6]. This outbreak might be related to the sale of bush meat derived from wild or captive sources in the seafood market [7].

The WHO has labeled as COVID-19 this emerging respiratory disease. The first cases of this pandemic were men, less than half of them reporting had underlying diseases including diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disease. Common presenting symptoms at the onset of illness were fever, cough and myalgia or fatigue. Less common symptoms were productive cough, headache, hemoptysis and diarrhea. Complications included acute respiratory distress syndrome, acute cardiac and renal injury and secondary bacterial infection [8-10].

The amount of information about the new coronavirus is increasing daily and more data on transmission and its route, reservoirs, incubation period, symptoms and clinical outcomes, including survival rates, are collected around the world [5]. Too many hypotheses appeared and many of them were dislodged such as the Spanish Iron toxicity hypothesis.

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