

Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic: Expectations from the Public Health Authorities and Other Stakeholders

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ABSTRACT

The coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) outbreak has been declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, with a very high risk of global transmission depending on the changing dynamics of the distribution of the disease. Considering the rapid pace of the international spread of the novel infection and the kind of public health threat-cum-impact that the disease has imposed, the World Health Organization declared the ongoing outbreak a pandemic. The need of the hour is to institute early and effective measures, which will help the nations to interrupt the transmission as well as save human lives and reduce anxiety among the general population. To conclude, the COVID-19 pandemic has overwhelmed the health sector and also created a sense of fear among all the public health authorities and thus it is the responsibility of all the stakeholders, including the general population to strictly adhere to the recommendations proposed by the national governments in the battle against this novel infection.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, Preparedness, World Health Organization.

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INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) outbreak has been declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, with a very high risk of global transmission depending on the changing dynamics of the distribution of the disease.^{1,2} The available estimates depict that as of 26 March 2023, in excess of 760 million confirmed cases and more than 6.7 million deaths have been reported across the world.¹ All these estimates suggest that the novel viral infection has to be prioritized by the public health authorities across the world.^{2,3} Considering the rapid pace of the international spread of the novel infection, periodic emergence of new strains of the virus resulting in new chains of transmission of infection, and the kind of public health threat-cum-impact that the disease has imposed, the World Health Organization has declared the ongoing outbreak as Pandemic.²⁻⁵

Outbreak Readiness and Response Plan

The first and foremost step will be to get significant insights into the disease so that strategies can be planned for better preparedness and response plan.³⁻⁵ Even though, we are still not having conclusive evidence about the epidemiological and clinical spectrum of the disease, we are certain that the virus is quite capable of community transmission (unlike influenza epidemics wherein extensive community transmission is the norm), yet can be contained by adhering to the standard cough etiquette, respiratory hygiene, and other well-documented measures.^{2,5} The need of the hour is to institute early and effective measures, which will help the nations to interrupt the transmission as well as save human lives and reduce anxiety among the general population.²⁻⁴

Furthermore, it is important to accept that the disease dynamics might differ between each nation and we cannot be sure that adoption of a specific approach will help universally.⁵ In fact, the individual nations can tailor-made their response plan based on the

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first isolated case, the first cluster of cases, and depending on the initial report of community transmission.³⁻⁵ Even though, the standard protocol for the outbreak (viz. case detection, isolation, treatment, contact tracing, risk communication, community engagement, infection prevention and control, etc.) remains the same, the emphasis on each of these domains can vary based on the prevailing factors.^{3,4} In addition, we have to ensure that supply chain management has to be strengthened to ensure that all the necessary logistics are available in the nations for launching an effective containment response plan for the infection.^{1,5} Further, the members of the community should practice social distancing measures, and avoid close contact with suspect cases and social gatherings.³⁻⁵

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the COVID-19 pandemic has overwhelmed the health sector and also created a sense of fear among all the public health authorities and thus it is the responsibility of all the stakeholders, including the general population to strictly adhere to the recommendations proposed by the national governments in the battle against this novel infection.

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