



SHORT COMMUNICATION

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Recommendations for stakeholders for the effective containment of COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract

The coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) outbreak was declared as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on 30 January 2020. The Emergency Committee has recommended that the PHEIC status of the COVID-19 will continue to persist as the disease continues to rise in many pockets of the world. An extensive search of all materials related to the topic was carried out in the PubMed search engine and World Health Organization website. Relevant research articles focusing on COVID-19 and the role of stakeholders published in the year 2020 were included in the review. A set of recommendations has been released for all the stakeholders and it is expected that we all work together to bring the novel infection under control. As the COVID-19 has impacted all the dimensions of health care, it becomes extremely important to explore the opportunities to ensure the delivery of essential care as well as the response required for the novel infection. In conclusion, the COVID-19 infection continues to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern and it is the responsibility of all the international welfare organizations, national leaders, public health authorities, and members of the community to act in a coordinated manner to effectively contain the infection.

Keywords: COVID-19 outbreak, Public Health Emergency of International Concern, Stakeholders, World Health Organization

Introduction

The coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) outbreak was declared as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on 30 January 2020 [1]. Since then, the disease attained pandemic status and the caseload continued to rise, and as of 18 March 2021, a cumulative total of 116363935 people has been diagnosed with the infection, while 2587225 people have lost their lives to the novel viral infection [2]. The disease which was first reported in a single city has now been reported in 219 nations and territories and the global case fatality rate has increased to 2.2% [2]. The third Emergency Committee has recommended that the PHEIC status of the COVID-19 will continue to persist as the disease continues to rise in many pockets of the world [1,2]. It is worth noting that multiple variants of the causative virus have been reported worldwide, including the United Kingdom variant (B.1.1.7) [3]. Initial reports have revealed that the variant spreads

more easily and faster in comparison to other variants and thus might be linked with an augmented risk of mortality. Further, the new virus variant has been reported in different nations across the globe [3]. The emergence of the new variant has accounted for fear among the public health authorities and compelled authorities to invoke lockdown of varying intensity in the affected nations.

In the essence, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has emerged as one of the biggest international health challenges, and it will be extremely difficult for us to contain the same if we don't act together. This calls for the need to release a specific set of recommendations for all the stakeholders and how we all can act in a well-coordinated and collaborative manner to contain the disease. Thus, the present article focuses on specific recommendations targeting different stakeholders, which will guide us to not only mount an effective response against the ongoing pandemic but also be better prepared for managing future similar incidents.

Material and Methods

An extensive search of all materials related to the topic was carried out in the PubMed search engine and World Health Organization website. Relevant research articles focusing on COVID-19 and the role of stakeholders published in the year 2020 were included in the review. Keywords used in the search include COVID-19, Public

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Health Emergency of International Concern, Stakeholders, and World Health Organization. The collected information is presented under the following sub-headings, namely the Role of the World Health Organization, Delivery of essential services, Ensuring community engagement, Recommendations for the public health sector, and Strengthening preparedness and outbreak readiness.

Role of the World Health Organization

A set of recommendations have been released for all the stakeholders and it is expected that we all work together to bring the novel infection under control. The World Health Organization has to continue the role of coordination of all the activities, plan strategies & recommendations to meet the needs of various stakeholders, monitor the overall trends of the disease, and support vulnerable nations with required technical, diagnostic, and logistics that are required for mounting an effective response [2]. Further, as the origin of the virus is not yet identified, there is an immense need to adopt One Health approach, wherein the health sector work in coordination with stakeholders responsible for animal health & food and agriculture organization. This is required to prevent the emergence of similar outbreaks in the future, reduce infection among animals & humans, minimize the possibility of new zoonotic reservoirs of the infection, and maintain the food supply chain management [2].

Delivery of essential services

As the COVID-19 has impacted all the dimensions of health care, it becomes extremely important to explore the opportunities to ensure delivery of essential care as well as the response required for the novel infection. In the absence of the delivery of essential care, it is anticipated that we might be soon facing outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases due to interrupted immunization or multiple incidents of gender abuse or violence due to the lack of delivery of sexual and reproductive health services [4].

Ensuring community engagement

To successfully contain the infection, it is of paramount importance to have the support of the community in all the decisions taken by the public health authorities. The best way to ensure community engagement is to establish a risk communication mechanism and ensuring that all the required information is passed on to the general population in a timely and transparent manner through reliable sources [5].

Recommendations for the public health sector

Further, it is quite essential to have precise estimates about the disease so that appropriate responses can be tailored and implemented [6]. In-fact, the availability of comprehensive estimates about the disease also aids in forecasting the requirements of the health care establishments (viz. human workforce, bed strength, supply of personal protective equipment, etc.) and in relaxing or imposing the public health and social measures, which many nations have implemented or planning to do so as a part of the lockdown to limit the movement of the people [6]. Moreover, there is an immense

need to strengthen the travel and trade sector and improve their readiness to deal with the outbreak's emergence. This needs to be carefully planned as once the travel and trade facilities resume, there will be a definite risk for import or export of new cases [6].

Strengthening preparedness and outbreak readiness

While all these actions are being taken, the health sector should continue to improve its readiness (in the field of improving testing facilities, number of beds for isolation and quarantine, contact tracing, bed strengths in intensive care units, supply of personal protective equipment, etc.) and be ready to respond to a large-scale community transmission. Finally, we have to continue and invest more in the field of research and development to identify an effective drug or a vaccine as until they are available none of the nations can conclude that they have effectively contained the infection in their settings [2,6].

Conclusion

In conclusion, the COVID-19 infection continues to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern and it is the responsibility of all the international welfare organizations, national leaders, public health authorities, and members of the community to act in a coordinated manner to effectively contain the infection.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Financial Disclosure

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Ethical approval

Ethics committee approval was not obtained.

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