



Editorial

COVID 19: Plan Purposefully, Pursue Persistently

Bangladesh is now at a critical juncture in the corona virus disease (COVID) 19 pandemic. This developing country has suffered a lot due to COVID 19. Pre-existing diseases have already burdened its weak health care system, posing the country with a thrilling challenge in the current pandemic situation. An ongoing outbreak of pneumonia is caused by a novel corona virus about which we have little knowledge. On 23rd January 2020, the lock-down in Wuhan, a central city in China, alarmed people all over the world about this emerging novel corona virus that was posing major public health challenges¹. The first case of someone suffering from COVID 19 can be traced back to 17th November 2019, according to media reports based on unpublished Chinese government data. Official statements by the Chinese government to the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that, the first confirmed case had been diagnosed on 8th December 2019². On 30th January 2020, WHO declared a public health emergency of international concern³.

Early diagnosis can help by identifying cases and areas for individual and group isolation. From draconian process of complete lockdown to confirmatory diagnosis and isolation is being practiced by almost every nation. Bangladesh has already started different mitigation processes to gain some control over this situation and the National Guidelines on Clinical Management of COVID 19 is a part of the strategy to address the case management of COVID 19 cases in Bangladesh with specific recommendations. A specific test for confirmation is done by real time polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) taking samples from the upper and lower respiratory tract until and unless serological tests and other WHO recommended tests are available. Every hospital (Public and private) should provide treatment for COVID and non COVID patients. These hospitals have created a separate zone for COVID and non COVID patients on the hospital premises (Subject to government policy) and a triage system has been applied to classify and differentiate the patients. The COVID zone has two separate areas; one for confirmed COVID and another for suspected or probable COVID patients. The principles of management are an appropriate supportive therapy in pneumonia cases ranging from low to high flow oxygen therapy, prone position, empiric antibiotics, antivirals (Favipiravir in hospitalized patients), anticoagulant for all hospitalized patients, steroids in severe to critical illness and mechanical ventilation for acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) cases. For critically ill patients, careful fluid (Avoid excessive fluid) balance and oxygen administration is the mainstay of therapy. SaO₂ target of 88-96% should be the aim. Consider trial of high flow nasal cannula (HFNC), continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) and non-invasive ventilation (NIV) for oxygen administration (Where facilities are available), awake proning before mechanical ventilation⁴.

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) revealed the latest figures which showed that the fast spreading corona virus had claimed 1,165,459 lives and infected 43,844,510 people across the world till October 26th, 2020, according to worldometer. It has spread to 215 countries and territories across the planet. On March 8, health authorities in Bangladesh reported the first three cases of Covid-19, a severe acute respiratory illness. Bangladesh has logged more than 401,000 corona virus cases and the total number of fatalities is 5,838. An overall infection rate of 17.58% and the mortality rate against the total number of cases detected so far stands at 1.45%⁵.

As the world continues to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic, the most important message remains relevant that, preparation is the key. As long as the virus is circulating anywhere, anybody can be at risk, so we need to strengthen the health system. It will benefit us now and in the future. As the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and DGHS have taken a greater role in offering health services to Bangladesh, multi-sectoral

coordination has become even more important. Yet COVID-19 does not only demand a whole government approach, it also demands a whole society approach, where the public should take responsibility for preventing the transmission. Be a good citizen and protect yourself, family and community from COVID-19. Wearing face mask, practicing hand hygiene and maintaining physical distance are obligatory. Healthy choices and protective behaviours can save lives and stop transmission.

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