

COVID-19 AND IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL DISTANCING

Leena Nanotkar¹, Sneha Dhanvij², Abhishek Joshi³

^{1,2}Clinical Instructor, Datta Meghe College of Nursing, Hingana, Nagpur-441110

³Associate Professor, Dept. of Community Medicine Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College,

Datta Meghe Institute of Medical Sciences, Wardha-442001

E-mail: leena.nanotkar19@gmail.com

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Abstract

The global outbreak of the novel coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, has been declared a public health emergency by the WHO where more than one million people have been infected by the disease, with more than 50,000 deaths to date. Social distancing is a way of reducing interactions between people and preventing the spread of disease among groups of people. It is a common practice that has been practiced over centuries to reduce the spread of the virus by restricting its rate of reproduction (R₀) among populations. The article focuses on how social differences have been used to cope with past pandemics internationally and on the problems that need to be resolved to tackle the danger of COVID-19.

Keywords--- COVID-19; R₀; WHO; social distancing; H1N1; H2N2; influenza

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INTRODUCTION

The global outbreak of the novel coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, has been declared a public health emergency by the WHO where more than a million people have been infected by the disease, with more than 50,000 deaths to date. A total 200 countries registered cases of COVID-19, with the United States reporting the largest number of cases and Italy having the highest number of deaths [1].

The severity of the disease varies from asymptomatic to fatal, often affecting people with poor immune systems and the elderly. COVID-19 differs from SARS-CoV where patients during the prodromal period have the ability to produce a large number of virus replications that contribute to the spread of infections. For SARS-CoV cases, transmission occurred only when serious illness was detected, making it easier to detect than with COVID-19 [2].

The transmission route has mainly been identified as a droplet and airborne transmission, numerous studies are still ongoing on the occurrence of COVID-19 in air samples, and the WHO has not yet classified the disease as an airborne disease [3].

Most patients are checked only if they exhibit symptoms, making it less accurate to determine the number of "hidden deaths" caused by COVID-19. The WHO has consistently emphasized the need for testing, with a shortage of test kits and personal protective equipment (PPE) in many countries, there is a high risk that many patients suffering from COVID-19 will not be detected [4].

Social Distancing in Pandemics Which is the importance of social distance as a consequence of the outbreak of COVID-19? Many of us have been used to hear the word social distances and lockdowns in a number of countries, initially locking in Wuhan, China to avoid the spread of the disease to other parts of the world and eventually to other countries such as Italy, Germany, Israel, Sri Lanka, India, United Kingdom, France and Belgium. Social distancing is a way of reducing interactions between people and preventing the spread of disease among groups of people. This is a common phenomenon that has been practiced over decades, i.e.

student and teacher interactions, where most students avoid being nearest to the teacher and choose to sit in the last row [5]. A total of 50 to 100 million deaths have been recorded worldwide during the 1918 influenza pandemic, although social distancing was not enforced back in 1918, the majority of the population took "reactive social distancing steps" that made it possible to avoid the outbreak of the disease [6].

This behavioral activity, followed by several million, led to a pandemic that limited harm after WW1 in many European countries. The same cycle was followed during 1957/58 for the spread of the H2N2 virus (Asia Flu) where Asians were restricted to traveling across borders and remaining indoors during the pandemic [7].

More recently, a decade ago, the epidemic of H1N1, also known as swine flu, infected almost 60 million people, the spread of the disease was regulated by general interventions such as social distancing to prevent human-to-human transmission of the disease [8].

IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL DISTANCING PRACTICES

In the modern world, interactions are performed on a regular basis using available technology, but the majority of activities carried out on a daily basis rely on social interaction. Social interaction and contact are necessary as an economic outlook for the country, as workers need to function on a regular basis to allow cash flow in their respective companies, and it is also essential for traders and consumers to generate income [9].

Social distancing practices allow individuals to keep distances from each other. Others shall be reduced for a period of time to prevent the transmission of the disease. It would reduce the basic replication number (R₀) of the virus, which would limit the spread of the disease. A analysis carried out by Prem and the test team [10].

Established that social distancing strategies have been fully applied and an average of 92% of cases will be decreased by the end of 2020. A person affected by COVID-19 has the potential to spread it to 2-3 people who will continue until they are distanced from each other. There are two common practices followed by

the use of social distances, one of them is social distancing and keeping a gap of almost 1 m between individuals and the other is remaining indoors at home. This approach has been effective both in the past and in the present, and Wuhan has been able to flatten the spread of the disease by adopting these practices. This is a zero-cost method that is entirely dependent on the behavioral patterns of individuals, most of whom do not comply with the rules laid down in the country [11]. If social distancing methods are ignored, the effect could last for generations to come as the COVID-19 virus will be able to develop different strains where scientists have discovered eight different strains of the virus to date [12].

DISCUSSION

Coronavirus outbreaks were an unprecedented occurrence that plunged the world into a lockdown, even though the majority of scientists and individuals blame the Chinese for the spread of the disease, there have been substantial reductions in healthcare facilities that have triggered this further pandemic. Several countries have been able to impose travel restrictions and home-based measures to reduce the rate of reproduction and spread of the virus among communities, but so far, the number of tests carried out worldwide has been low. Patients who show symptoms are considered for testing, while silent carriers who do not express symptoms are not tested [13].

The lack of availability of test kits has led to a number of laboratories restricting their resources in order to find the most disadvantaged people to be tested, a cost-effective activity in many countries that could become a major problem if not soon addressed.

The PPE has been widely used by health workers and staff to ensure that the spread of the disease within the hospital is limited. The global demand of the PPE has contributed to the exposure of many healthcare workers to COVID-19, which has resulted in several deaths [14].

The lack of understanding and preparedness on the part of a number of healthcare sectors has contributed to more difficulties in coping with COVID-19. Social distancing may also have its own consequences, where the economy of a number of countries has been deeply depressed in the last few months, and the desperate need for money to get the everyday necessities has led to panic buying, which has led to crowds gathering.

Middle-low-income countries such as India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh have seen mass gatherings that could have had an effect on the spread of COVID-19. Another problem caused by social distancing is that individuals are trapped inside, leading to depression and feeling lonely and having a significant impact on the individual's psychological thinking. Misleading and false messages and reports often play a significant role in damaging the overall mental strength and understanding of the individual leading to increased thinking and Concern [15].

CONCLUSION

With global cases of COVID-19 on the increase, the need for testing kits and PPE for healthcare workers should be the top priority for each country to minimize and diagnose disease early. In addition, social and emotional support must be provided to people suffering from depression and loneliness during this time of isolation via online channels and contact lines to avoid mental health problems. At the top, It is our duty to remain aware of COVID-19 and to report to the health authorities if any symptoms and signs are present rather than concealed. Maintaining social distance for a period of time will ensure that the spread of the disease is reduced.

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