

An Urgent Call to Improve the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic Readiness and Response Actions in the American Region: The World Health Organization

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Abstract

The pace of the international spread of the ongoing Corona Virus Disease-2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has become a grave cause of concern for the public health authorities. Moreover, based on the trend of the outbreak in other affected nations, the number of cases is expected to rise further in the coming days in the American region and this calls for the need to prepare health care establishments. Even though, the spread of the virus cannot be restricted by geographical boundaries, even now, a brief window of opportunity still exists for the health authorities to improve their outbreak readiness and response activities, which in turn will be crucial factors in reducing the overall caseload and saving a multiple number of human lives. In conclusion, the America region is facing an unprecedented challenge in the form of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and it is expected that the caseload will rise even in the future. Thus, there is an indispensable need to believe in ourselves and take every small step which can minimize or stop the transmission of the disease and this will essentially require active engagement of all the concerned sectors.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, American region, World Health Organization

INTRODUCTION

The pace of the international spread of the ongoing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID 19) pandemic has become a grave cause of concern for the public health authorities as the disease has already been detected in 206 nations and territories.^[1] The global estimates suggest that till date, a total of 8,23,626 cases and 40598 deaths have been linked with the complications of the disease, with the European being the most affected.^[1]

COVID-19 in American region

Till date, the American region has accounted for 1,88,751 cases (23% of the global cases) and 3400 deaths have been reported. A total of 35 nations and 16 territories in the region have reported cases, while the United States of America alone accounts for 86.5% of the caseloads and 83.8% of the reported deaths in the region.^[1,2] The epidemiological analysis has provided conclusive evidence that in 29 of the affected nations, local transmission has been reported. Moreover, based on the trend of the outbreak in China and some of the European nations, the number of cases is expected to rise further in the

coming days in the American region, and this calls for the need to prepare health care establishments.^[3]

Window of opportunity

Even though the spread of the virus cannot be restricted by geographical boundaries, even now, a brief window of opportunity still exists for the health authorities to improve their outbreak readiness and response activities, which in turn will be crucial factors in reducing the overall caseload and saving a multiple number of human lives.^[3,4] This is the time,

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wherein the health stakeholders should prepare themselves for a greater number of health establishments (isolation wards, quarantine facilities, emptying building and creating temporary wards, etc.), beds, medical supplies, personal protective equipment, and mobilization of health care professionals.^[3]

Public health response

At the same time, it has been proven that some of the nations in the region have even reported community transmission, which has accounted for the sudden rise in the daily incidence of the cases and also imposed a tremendous pressure on the health delivery system. These facts give enough background for the national leaders to take a call about the social distancing/lockdown and the duration for the same, which can be decided based on the health capacity of each nation. The role of social distancing and other nonpharmacological interventions becomes extremely crucial as we still are not having a vaccine or a proven therapeutic drug. However, we have to safeguard the health workforce and prevent them from not only acquiring infection but also provide them psychological support during these times of stress, anxiety, and loneliness.^[3,4]

Amid all these challenges and difficult conditions while responding to a novel viral infection, all the stakeholders should be really positive and hopeful about the ongoing battle against the disease. This is because the region has been successful in fighting against the outbreaks of multiple infectious diseases (viz., polio, smallpox, malaria elimination, etc.) in the past and has always emerged victorious. These encouraging results could not have been achieved without having a strong public health system and a committed health workforce, which is well trained to work even in resource limited settings.^[3] Further, all the political leaders are very much appraised of the task in hand, and the need of the hour is that each nation should take every possible step to reduce the spread of the infection, including improving the laboratory capacity, isolation facility, and treatment facilities.^[3-6]

Need for collaboration

Moreover, there is an extensive support and coordination between different nations in the region to improve their preparedness and response action. On a similar note, it is quite a certainty that the number of cases and the deaths will be eventually determined by the extent of coordination and the actions which are now taken.^[3] Further, the containment

of the outbreak will essentially require support from all the stakeholders, including the community, as they have to practice social distancing measures constantly and supplement the same with frequent handwashing, respiratory etiquettes, and report to health authorities if they develop signs or symptoms suggestive of the disease.^[4]

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the American region is facing an unprecedented challenge in the form of the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic, and it is expected that the caseload will rise even in the future. Thus, there is an indispensable need to believe in ourselves and take every small step which can minimize or stop the transmission of the disease, and this will essentially require the active engagement of all the concerned sectors.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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