

Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic: Meeting the Needs of Vulnerable Population Groups

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Abstract

The ongoing Corona Virus Disease-2019 (COVID-19) outbreak has already been given a Pandemic status and also continues to be a public health emergency of international concern. The epidemiological analysis and the trends of mortality clearly suggests that even though, the disease is quite common in all age-groups, the disease has manifested in severe forms among elderly and those people who are having pre-existing medical illnesses. It is the need of the hour to ensure that both these high-risk groups are offered additional attention, without subjecting them to isolation or stigmatization, which decreases their overall probability of access to health care services. Further, it is extremely important to strengthen the risk communication mechanism and take appropriate steps for the relay of timely and trustworthy measures to the entire community, with special attention to the two high-risk groups. In conclusion, as the COVID-19 continues to increase in magnitude and geographical distribution, it is our responsibility to take appropriate steps to improve the wellbeing of community, with an additional support to the high-risk population groups.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, Elderly, World Health Organization

INTRODUCTION

The ongoing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID 19) outbreak has already been given a pandemic status and also continues to be a public health emergency of international concern.^[1] The available estimates suggest that a total of 8,993,659 cases and 469,587 deaths have been reported across the affected nations and territories.^[1] In fact, since the emergence of the disease, it has shown a significantly high potential for the international spread, and till date, a total of 126 nations and territories have reported cases, which is extremely alarming.^[1]

COVID-19 and vulnerable groups

The epidemiological analysis and the trends of mortality clearly suggest that even though the disease is quite common in all age groups, the disease has manifested in severe forms among the elderly and those people who are having preexisting medical illnesses such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer.^[1,2] Further, it has been hypothesized that the probability of landing up into a severe form of the disease shows a gradual rise after the attainment of 40 years of age.^[2] In other words, it is a warning for adults

to safeguard themselves and also take measures to prevent the onward transmission of the infection to the elderly and people with preexisting medical illnesses.^[2]

Need of the hour

It is the need of the hour to ensure that both these high risk groups are offered additional attention, without subjecting them to isolation or stigmatization, which decreases their overall probability of access to health care services.^[2,3] Further, it is extremely important to strengthen the risk communication mechanism and take appropriate steps for the relay of timely and trustworthy measures to the entire community, with special attention to the two high risk groups.^[4] The specific advice

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includes maintaining a distance of minimum 1 m while meeting any visitors at the time of greeting them, encouraging the practice of handwash for the visitors as well as themselves, and promoting periodic cleaning and disinfection of those surfaces in the home which are frequently touched.^[4,5]

Other potential recommendations

At the same time, if the inmates become symptomatic (suggestive of COVID 19), the elderly people and those with preexisting illnesses should maintain a distance.^[3] In case, the elderly or individuals with preexisting illness themselves develop

symptoms, the health professionals should develop a telephonic contact with them and if the need arises, the health professionals should do a home visit.^[3,4] However, when these high risk groups have to go out in the community, they should strictly adhere to the similar kinds of preventive guidelines which are being practiced at home.^[3,5] Further, they should update themselves about the disease through trustworthy sources and not believe in any random news.^[3,5]

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, as the COVID 19 continues to increase in magnitude and geographical distribution, it is our responsibility

to take appropriate steps to improve the well being of community, with an additional support to the high risk population groups.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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