

Exploring the Role of Hand Hygiene in the Effective Containment of Coronavirus Disease-2019 Pandemic

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Abstract

The coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has made all the national leaders and the international organizations realize that the health sector progress in containment of infectious disease is still not enough. Being an infectious disease, which is highly contagious and is transmitted through close contact or droplets, the importance of infection prevention measures like frequent hand washing, cough etiquettes, etc., is indispensable. Amidst the background of COVID-19 infection, it is a must that the governments should ensure provision of universal access to hand hygiene stations, which can be used compulsorily by the people. In conclusion, in the global fight against COVID-19 pandemic, maintenance of hand hygiene has been regarded as the most effective approach to reduce the onward transmission of the infection. Thus, it is the responsibility of the public health authorities to create an adequate number of opportunities for the general community and the health care professionals to practice hand hygiene.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, Hand hygiene, Infection Prevention, World Health Organization

INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID 19) pandemic has made all the national leaders and the international organizations to accept the fact that even though we have made extensive progress in the health sector; nevertheless, a single infectious disease has made us realize that the progress is still not enough. It is quite alarming that a total of 14,562,550 cases and 607,781 deaths have been reported worldwide in 216 nations and territories affected by the novel viral infection.^[1] It is worth noting that the epicenter of the disease has shifted to the American region and the European region, after its initial high caseload in China and both the caseload as well as the disease specific death rates continue to increase with each day.^[1]

Effective strategies

A wide range of interventions has been proposed to effectively contain the infection, namely the active search for cases in community, testing of the suspect cases, isolation and appropriate treatment of the confirmed cases, identification of the contacts and quarantining them, maintaining social distancing and supporting all these measures with infection prevention and control measures to interrupt the chain of transmission.^[2] Being an infectious disease, which is highly

contagious and is transmitted through close contact or droplets, the importance of infection prevention measures such as frequent hand washing, cough etiquettes, standard use removal disposal of personal protective equipment, and periodic disinfection of the contaminated surfaces is extremely crucial.^[2]

Scope of hand hygiene

It is important to note that contact transmission becomes a possibility once contaminated hands touches the mucosa of the eyes mouth nose, and thus, the scope of hand hygiene in interrupting the chain of transmission is crucial.^[3,4] Moreover, the maintenance of hand hygiene is an important domain of disease control for various other bacterial and viral diseases, and thus, it needs to be improved

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worldwide.^[3,5] However, we have to accept the fact that despite the improvement of awareness about hand hygiene among people, the access to alcohol based hand rubs or soap clean water in either community or hospital settings has not been encouraging.^[3] In fact, the available global estimates depict that almost three billion people are deprived of hand hygiene facilities in home and 40% in health care facilities, which are shocking estimates.^[3,6]

Potential recommendations

Amidst the background of COVID 19 infection, it is a must that the governments should ensure the provision of universal access to hand hygiene stations, which can be used compulsorily by the people leaving or entering any public or private property or public transport facilities and same thing needs to be significantly improved in health care establishments as well.^[3,5] This can be accomplished by establishing hand hygiene stations in transport locations or all buildings, and it should be user friendly and adequate in number to avoid unnecessary waiting time.^[3,4] This entire process should be supervised by the public health authorities and to enhance the overall effectiveness, these physical measures should be supported with the arrangement of adequate supply of hand hygiene logistics, training/display of steps of hand hygiene, and awareness activities. The presence of a functional hand hygiene station is a must in health care establishments, and it should be encouraged that all health professionals, patients, family members, or visitors should utilize these services.^[3,6]

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, in the global fight against COVID 19 pandemic, the maintenance of hand hygiene has been regarded as the most effective approach to reduce the onward transmission of the infection. Thus, it is the responsibility of the public health authorities to create an adequate number of opportunities for the general community and the health care professionals to practice hand hygiene.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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