



Editorial

Post COVID-19 Pandemic Effects in Pakistan; Infodemic and Resilience

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Introduction

The fateful year of 2020 will go down the annals of history as the year of the pandemic 2020 originating from the city of Wuhan in China, the COVID-19 virus spread to more than 215 countries worldwide with astoundingly swift pace. As on 12th September 2020, the virus has infected more than 27 million people worldwide and taken more than 0.9 million lives.¹ From clinical point of view, the virus does not cause any illness or causes only mild but wide ranging symptoms in most of the affectees. However, in some cases, the effects of this virus, accentuated by existing morbidities like cancer, diabetes, hypertension etc., become much more devastating and fatal. The virus is highly contagious and spreads swiftly among the communities with many researchers categorizing it as an air-borne pathogen which can enter a person's respiratory system simply on inhaling the infected air.²

With respect to the environmental sustainability, the year 2020 is known as "super year" because of COVID-19 pandemic, the present year is causing a huge health danger in addition to vast social and economic destruction³. The community across the globe has identified the serious harming levels of COVID 19 because of rapid message and publication⁴. Infodemic refers to increase in the amount of information related with a peculiar topic and whose increase can take place rampantly in a brief period because of a particular event, for example the current COVID-19 pandemic³⁻⁴.

The present COVID-19 pandemic is extending over an infodemic of misstatement and resulted in a large number of incorrect information, hearsay evidence in conjunction with exploitation of information with suspicious intent.⁴⁻⁵ Rising access towards social media in addition to cell phones with an internet connection has responsible for producing exponential information epidemic or Infodemic.⁶ It has testimony that about 23%-26% of YouTube videos regarding COVID-19 were associated with circulating misinformation such as fake treatments, anti-vaccination hesitancy publicity and plot theories.⁷ Researchers noted that misinformation on social media intensify anxiety, depression, emotional instability, incapable to meet significant requirements, makes difficult for health workers and decision makers to find out the reliable guidance and sources, use of self-medication, lack of quality control regarding publication on the web particularly on the social media channels.⁶⁻⁹ This wrong information regarding COVID-19 is producing in numerous varieties, for example plot assumption which express the COVID-19 virus being created in a laboratory for utilize at the same time as a germ warfare.⁹⁻¹⁰

As a result, community reactions in an adverse approach and acquire harmful results. Furthermore, as person responses, community cannot pursue the strategies and guiding principles provided by standard nationwide and global health associations on account of their unawareness, misinformation particularly in the emergent and under-developed

countries. People can fight against this COVID-19 pandemic by trusting global and nationwide particular organizations like WHO and UN, recognize evidence, keep away from fake news, reporting risky rumors, contributing conscientiously in social conversations, sharing information sensibly, confirming the secure source of information and has been shared before continue collaborating and not share the information if it is not confirmed.⁷⁻⁹

Taking about the long term impact of COVID-19; patients who develop lung disease need evaluation for lung changes as this disease might cause permanent fibrosis and reduced lung capacity as seen in MERS and SARS epidemics.¹¹ Rarely some develop brain fog which is difficult thinking and concentration level.¹² Due to exceptionally swift rates of spread this virus and absence of any vaccine at this point in time, the only viable option to contain the spread was to limit person to person contact and practicing social distancing. Going by this plan, almost all countries of the world took strict, and often somewhat draconian, measures to curb gatherings and congregations. Due to these measures, markets were shut down in most of the world and the world practically came to a standstill. In this backdrop, many researchers have opined that the economic impacts of this virus are much more devastating than the health effects. The fact that the world is defining itself as pre-Covid and post-Covid, much like it does with pre-WWII and post-WWII, is sufficient to explain the scale and magnitude of the impacts that this virus has, and still continues to have, built on the human civilization.

Not withstanding the disastrous effects of the virus in neighboring countries like China, Iran and India, Pakistan has emerged as a country which has not been affected that badly by the virus. While the global fight against this virus is by no means over, the trajectory of cases and mortalities being reported in Pakistan are on a sharp downward trend with death rate being significantly lower than that of even the countries having most sophisticated public health systems. These surprising results have left many experts awestruck and a number of researches are already underway to look into the causes of these

results in a Pakistan, given its dilapidated public health infrastructure and poor facilities. With most of the restrictions on public gatherings already lifted, the country is set to open educational institutions by mid-September. While many countries are still bearing the brunt of the virus' onslaught, the public discourse in Pakistan is gradually moving towards the discussions on the aftermath of the virus.¹³⁻¹⁴

The pandemic, despite not causing as much damage in Pakistan as it has in other countries, has had a profound impact on already fragile public health infrastructure of Pakistan. Many healthcare providers have lost their lives in the line of duty while serving the masses during these testing and difficult times. Critical equipment like ventilators and oximeters went almost entirely out of stock during the peak days of this pandemic due to which many elective surgeries had to be postponed. However, with the peak days of pandemic already past, the public health system is gradually getting restored to the status of pre-Covid days. OPD's of all major hospitals, which were earlier shut down, have now been opened. Similarly, quarantine centers established by the government, are now being disbanded and life seems to be returning to its normal phase.¹⁵

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