



EDİTÖRE MEKTUP / LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Envisaging employment of the non-pharmaceutical interventions in the effective containment of the COVID-19 pandemic

COVID-19 salgınının etkili bir şekilde muhafaza edilmesine yönelik farmasötik olmayan müdahalelerin istihdamının öngörülmesi

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To the Editor,

The Corona Virus Disease-2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has been reported in 215 nations and territories since the first case of the novel viral infection was detected in China in December 2019¹. Since then, a total of 3517345 cases and 243401 deaths have been attributed to the infection due to the development of complications. The epicenter of the pandemic is presently in the European and the American region, but then all the regions of the world are affected and none of the nations can be complacent and let down their guard against the infection, as the pandemic is far from over¹.

Being a novel viral infection, till date, there is neither a vaccine available in the market to prevent the acquisition of infection, nor a therapeutic drug available to treat the disease once a patient acquires the infection². Moreover, the available scientific evidence has concluded that the most common modes of the transmission of infection between humans are through close contact or droplets. In general, for containing an infectious disease, vaccine, treatment and isolation have been identified as the primary strategies. Even though, the research and development activities to develop the candidate vaccine or drug (through the Solidarity Trial) is in full flow, we are still to get a final drug or vaccine for commercial use. Thus, till a drug or vaccine becomes available in the market, non-pharmaceutical interventions, including isolation remains the key

strategies to minimize the risk of acquisition or onward transmission of the infection and thereby reducing the caseload of the disease²⁻⁴.

Isolation of the cases has been done with an aim to prevent the transmission of the infectious agent from the infected person to the close contacts or the community³. It has been anticipated that if we succeed in ensuring strict isolation of all the infected case, it will interrupt the chain of transmission and we can thus flatten the curve of the disease³. On the similar lines, quarantine of the contacts for the incubation period of the disease has been envisaged as another important prevention and control measure and the public health authorities should intensify the activity of contact tracing³. The implementation of isolation of the cases and quarantine will significantly minimize the health care demands as we will succeed in reducing the disease caseload^{4,5}.

In-fact, many of the national public health leaders have understood the importance of isolation and thus imposed lockdown of varied duration within their settings³. The decision to impose lockdown has reduced the physical movement of all the people and thus minimized the probability of transmission of infection to a random number of contacts. However, we have to realize that isolation alone won't deliver sustainable results, unless we supplement it with other standard infection prevention and control measures^{2,5}. In other words, we have to encourage physical distancing (through closure of education

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institutions, promotion of work-from-home, delaying unnecessary travel, avoiding social gatherings, closure of religious places, etc.) and to ensure that frequent hand washing with soap and water is also advocated^{2,4,5}.

Further, the measures for promotion of respiratory hygiene should become a part of the daily routine and all the symptomatic individuals with COVID-19 symptoms should be instructed to wear appropriate personal protective equipment². Once again, we have to remember that the use of these protective equipment should be consistent, done in the correct manner and after use it should be disposed-off in the recommended manner⁵. In addition, the frequently touched surfaces should be periodically cleaned or disinfected. Finally, all these infection prevention and control measures should be strictly adhered by all the health care professionals who are involved in patient care or community activities².

In conclusion, in the absence of a drug or a vaccine, isolation is our key strategy to minimize the risk of acquisition or spread of the COVID-19 infection. However, we have to supplement isolation activities with physical distancing and other behavioral modifications to eventually win the battle against the novel infection.

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