

## COVID – 19: A CLINICAL ENIGMA, PREVENTION IS THE STRATEGY

Shahanara Chowdhury<sup>1\*</sup>

World health is passing through a new phase of evolution by the COVID-19 pandemic. Covid-19 is a highly infectious condition caused by Novel Coronavirus (SARS-COV-2) a new strain of coronavirus family. It was first identified in Wuhan province of China in December 2019<sup>1</sup>.

In Bangladesh, the first case of COVID-19 was detected on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and since then as on 24<sup>th</sup> August according to the Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) there are 297,083 confirm covid cases in Bangladesh including 3,694 related deaths, Infection Fatality Rate (IFR) is 1.34%<sup>2</sup>.

This new Strain of Coronavirus (SARS-COV-2) causing COVID-19 is very contagious with a high rate of transmission by respiratory droplets, airborne transmission and also from surface contact<sup>3</sup>. Most of the strains of corona virus is related to flu-like symptoms ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases like Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)<sup>3</sup>. The most common presentations suspicious of corona virus infection is influenza like symptoms including fever, body ache, sore throat, dry cough or difficulty in breathing, extreme tiredness, although most people will not have severe symptoms. Several study showed oro-fecal route as another route of transmission appeared as gastrointestinal symptoms as a primary presentation<sup>4</sup>. The persons presented with GI upset like diarrhea, loss of appetite, anosmia and many others could have been a favorable outcome compared to those with respiratory symptoms and fever. However though the COVID-19 appears to spread more aggressively than other members of the equivalent coronavirus infections, the mortality rate seems to be less, with 2.8% of people dying from COVID-19 compared

to 9.6% from SARS<sup>5</sup>. No age is immune to this infection, although the elderly and those with co-morbid conditions are more susceptible<sup>5</sup>.

Whenever the corona-virus infection has spread worldwide, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Covid-19 as a pandemic on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020. Since then globally it has been taken as a national emergency and different strategies has been taken to fight against this dreaded infection. Under the guidance of WHO, nationally and internationally, the countries are trying best at their level to prevent the spread by lockdowns, self isolation, raising public awareness, testing, contact tracing and quarantine<sup>6</sup>. Attention has been focused on containing the spread of the virus, by isolation of infected and self-quarantine of contacts.

No specific pharmacological treatments available currently and no vaccine yet to be developed so far, but many are in the pipeline. Till date, many reports on the drug trial have been found but none seems to be significantly effective in corona viruses. Remdesivir (An anti-viral developed by Gilead Sciences) is in trials, shows to decrease viral load, decrease disease severity and hospital stay. An US company (Moderna) has developed a vaccine using a novel genetic technique and also Oxford University, Chinese and Russian vaccine is on phase III trial<sup>7</sup>.

Many important preventive steps has been taken to contain the spread of the virus, basic personal hygiene like hand washing, maintaining social distancing and wearing face masks are recommended to combat and limit virus spread. Hospitals are over burdened with patients puts on extra stress to the healthcare staffs and have to makeshifts to tackle the crisis<sup>8</sup>. Implementation and practice of the basic principles of Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) following the public health measures of wearing a mask, practice of hand hygiene and social distancing are the most important steps for prevention and containment of the infection. There is an emergence of the need for personal protective equipment for Health Care Worker (HCW) within this economic crisis. The people are asked to stay at home for all but only for urgent reasons<sup>9</sup>.

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1. Editor-In-Chief  
JCMCTA  
&  
Head, Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology  
Chittagong Medical College, Chattogram.

**\*Correspondence:** Professor (Dr) Shahanara Chowdhury  
E-mail: shahanacmc@yahoo.com  
Cell: 01711 74 72 80

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**Crisis on Economy :** World health and economy is under a huge threat with its future impact on the growth and development because of this pandemic. The treat to the financial crisis for a low resource country added a fire to a fuel at individual level and also at national levels. Most of the business stopped, stock markets suffered, travel banned and put most of the countries understand still.

**Educational Crisis :** All the teaching and educational institutes are closed for a long time imparting a tremendous impact on the psychology among the students. Though newer options like tele-education opening up, it has its own limitation especially for medical education.

**Health Issues :** The “New normal” strategies impose a great challenge for everybody to cope up with this new changing situation. Emergence of this new Covid-19, impart a new challenge between work life balance for health care providers at present and also overall medical profession in future. It puts an extra burden for the frontline health care providers, who dedicated their service at the cost of their lives, and also are facing numerous challenges both in the society and workplace. They are confused and suffer a lot of anxiety regarding personal protection versus commitment towards family, healthcare and thus the society.

There is a tremendous burden over the health care services both in terms of Covid-19 trained manpower and also with life saving logistics including personal protective equipments. Health care practitioners and many of the private institute has limited their both covid and non-covid services causing health care situation of the region more vulnerable. Though tele-medicine services were opened up both by the government and also by individual levels, it is not enough to handle the situation. Many of the medical societies are also come forward with tele-medicine services along with their health care educational exercise by webinars.

**Health Care Research :** This recent pandemic evolves a new research avenue in health care industry. Many of the reviews and research outcome are available free from online authentic sources like Cochrane, WHO bulletin, BMJ and Lancet etc. However the health care community is overburdened with that rapidly evolving and changing health information on Covid-19 management put the doctors into another dilemma. As the epidemic

is so recent, we rely mostly on symptom based clinical presentation, RT-PCR from nasal/nasopharyngeal secretions, blood tests, Chest imaging (CXR) and Computed Tomography (CT) scanning if required, but even there is a wide variation regarding the sensitivity and specificity of those test involved<sup>10</sup>. Updated information on patients management related to Covid-19 is continuously reviewed, their safety, management protocols are distributed among the providers and hence newer information are adding to our existing knowledge.

**Women’s Health is Under Threat :** Safety of the women’s health and their families is a priority issue worldwide. WHO laid down strategies in this pandemic situation with a mission of keeping women’s health and well being under control. Maternity is a natural phenomenon, but their management during this pandemic crisis needs special attention. Fewer modifications have been done with clear cut instruction on how to manage health care issues within our existing traditional practices. This includes, routine and emergency obstetrical care including those who needs chronic and emergency gynecological service<sup>10</sup>.

Tele-medicine services are in practice in an attempt to maintain the health of the women and also for the expecting mothers along with limited numbers of the face to face ante natal visits. Women are encouraged to practice contraception to avoid unwanted pregnancy considering the impact of uncertainty on unborn.

Modifying the health care intervention can save the life of both the patients, their families, and overall the health care providers concern.

Scientific literature, articles, press release, expert opinion, national guidelines, experiences of those dealing with the Covid -19 patients specially those dealing with pregnant women<sup>4,10</sup>.

In conclusion, the old age strategy of “prevention is better than cure” is the mainstay of Covid-19 management-as effective and reliable treatment protocol yet to be evolving and till the availability of the effective vaccine for all.

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