



# Editorial

## Adopt the New Normal

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Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a contagious disease caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).<sup>1</sup> In December 2019 Wuhan Municipal Health Commission, China, reported a cluster of cases of pneumonia in Wuhan, Hubei Province. Eventually a novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2 causing COVID-19 was first identified there.<sup>2,3</sup> Then on 13 January 2020, the first recorded case was found outside of China in Thailand. Unfortunately, the disease quickly spread worldwide, resulting in the COVID-19 pandemic. Though at the beginning the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak as a public health emergency of international concern on 30 January 2020 and finally as a pandemic disease on 11 March 2020.<sup>4</sup>

The pandemic is still in progress, so many new incidents are reported every day, morbidity and mortality is also significantly high. Till 6 July 2020 globally, the total Covid -19 confirmed cases were 1,439,662 and death cases were 38,692.<sup>5</sup> We have heard about the death toll in World War I and II from the history books, movies and documentaries, the current situation is worse than that. It might be recorded in our memories as a modern form of a new World War against an invisible enemy.

Like many countries across the world, Bangladesh has been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic. In Bangladesh, the first 3 COVID -19 cases were reported on 8 March 2020 by the, Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR).<sup>6,7</sup> Since then, the pandemic has spread day by day over the whole nation and the number of affected people has been increasing. Bangladesh is the second most affected country in South Asia, after India.<sup>6</sup> Infections remained low until the end of March but saw a steep rise in April.<sup>8</sup> On 11 April,

new cases in Bangladesh grew by 1,155 percent, the highest in Asia.<sup>9</sup> Then on 6 May, cases were confirmed in all districts of our country. Gradually the number of cases in Bangladesh exceeded the number of cases in China, the country where the outbreak began.<sup>10</sup> Bangladesh reached two grim milestones of 160,000 cases and 2,000 deaths on 5 July 2020.<sup>10</sup> The number of recoveries in the country exceeded the number of active cases on 12 July 2020.<sup>10</sup> In this situation, the resilience of our society is constantly being challenged.

As the virus is extremely contagious, person to person transmission occur through exhalation, coughing, sneezing, direct physical contact, contaminated fomites, etc particularly where there is close contact between people happen.<sup>11</sup> During this short period of time the contagious SARS-CoV-2 virus spread rapidly throughout the region and the world. At this moment Bangladesh as a developing country with low socio-economic status to overcome the challenges of COVID-19 should focus on prevention by adopting the new normal in our everyday life.

During the financial crisis of 2008 the term "new normal" first appeared to describe the dramatic economic, cultural, and social transformations that seriously impacted collective perceptions and individual lifestyles. This term has been used again during the COVID-19 pandemic. Now what does the New Normal mean?

These are the simple guidelines for the general people by the World Health Organization (WHO) for the prevention of COVID -19

- **using a mask while in outdoor settings:** Mask should wear properly because it is the first and main protection until vaccine is developed.

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- **maintaining social distancing/ queuing** is now the norm: Keeping at least 2-meter (6 feet) distance from each other when visiting health professionals, going to the market, or even getting inside a lift.
- **washing hands:** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using alcohol based (contain at least 60% alcohol) hand sanitizer
- **Practice respiratory hygiene:** (i.e, cover mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, discard tissue immediately in a closed bin and wash hand)
- **staying indoor and avoiding public gatherings:** (i.e, cultural program, sports)
- **say no to:** shaking hands, hugging, and greeting by kissing someone's cheeks.
- Moreover, some new words also have entered our daily vocabulary as a part of new normal and most probably they will not be disappearing very soon like coronavirus, pandemic, lockdown, masks, PPE, N95, physical distancing, sanitization, hand washing, isolation, quarantine, contact tracing, herd immunity, and so on.

Most people wear protective masks when they walk on the street as they are concerned about the rapid rise in coronavirus cases and deaths in Bangladesh. Like using mask, practicing all other measures have already made a great change in our lifestyle of indoor and outdoor settings. Obviously, we are trying to cope with the new normal. We should do it until other means of protection especially vaccine is available to us.

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