

Corona Virus Disease 2019 pandemic: Establishment of new or repurposed treatment centres to reduce the burden on the health system

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Dear Editor:

In the ongoing Corona Virus Disease-2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, due to the continuous rise in the number of cases, the health systems have been overstretched and they are finding it extremely difficult to respond to the rising caseload. From the global perspective, a total of 693224 cases and 33106 deaths has been reported since the start of the outbreak in China [1]. It is worth noting that in a single day, 58411 cases have been reported worldwide, of which 54.3% cases were from the European region alone [1]. Moreover, the caseload and the pressure experienced by some of the European nations (like Italy, Spain, Germany, France, etc.) and the United States of America, all of which are developed nations, is not hidden from anyone of us [1].

From the national perspective, it is worth considering that if the developed nations have not been able to cope up to the rising needs of the ongoing pandemic, the scenario will be extremely challenging and the outcome of the outbreak in developing nations can turn out to be disastrous. The best approach to deal with this novel infection is through outbreak readiness and formulating an effective action plan to respond to this public health emergency [2]. The impact of the disease has been so much alarming and overwhelming that most of the nations have imposed a complete lockdown for variable time duration within their settings. Even though, this strategy has shown effectiveness in breaking the chain of transmission, but from Policy Makers' perspective, it has been done to get some additional time to improve the readiness of the nation.

It is quite obvious that none of the nations are well-equipped to respond to the sudden upsurge in cases or the rising health care-related needs of the affected individuals, and thus there is an immense need to establish a temporary treatment centre across different parts of the nation and make it operational [3]. These treatment centres should be built keeping in mind the standard infection control practices and other requirements which will thereby aid in the delivery of optimal health care and simultaneously not enhance the risk of transmission of the disease [3-4]. In-fact, with an aim to help the nations in this regard, a manual has been formulated to assist and guide the health authorities about establishment and management of treatment centres in low and middle-income nations [5].

In general, the document emphasizes three major domains, namely guidelines to set up a screening and triage unit in health facilities, instructions to establish community-level facilities for extending care to patients suffering from the mild-version of the disease, and guidelines to create a treatment centre by modifying the existing hospital wards or hospitals or making a new hospital in a tent [4]. Specific emphasis has been given towards the structural design of the building, water-sanitation & hygiene facilities, biomedical waste disposal, ventilation system, and the presence of infection prevention and control measures [4-6]. Adherence to these guidelines will ensure that all the newly created or repurposed treatment centres will meet the desired quality through carrying out the

suggested improvements [5]. However, it is worth acknowledging that mere existence of a treatment centre will not improve the health outcomes, unless it is well supported by adequate supply of diagnostics, personal protective equipment and other logistics [2, 5].

In conclusion, in order to respond to the rising health care needs and the extensive caseload on the health delivery system, it is extremely

important that temporary treatment centres should be established and made operational keeping in mind the standard recommendations. These new or repurposed treatment centres will significantly reduce the burden on the existing hospitals and will also play an important role in reducing the risk of transmission of the infection due to the overcrowded settings.

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