mechanisms of COVID-19 inflammation induced as well coagulation disorders. As the disease spreads and new evidence emerges, we need to identify the existence of additional pathophysiological mechanisms of stroke in COVID-19 patients. We should establish a prospective registry of these patients to better identify the factors most responsible for a possible greater onset or worse prognosis of stroke in these patients and to identify and/or predict a better or lesser response of these patients to thrombolytic treatments.

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References


Early phases of COVID-19 management in a low-income country: Bangladesh

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To the Editor—The World Health Organization has emphasized the importance of diagnostic testing in tracking and managing COVID-19, and most high-income economies have adopted widespread population testing schemes. The United States now leads the way, with >370,000 tests performed as of March 26, 2020.1 This level of testing starkly contrasts with low-income economies such as Bangladesh, where an almost contrarian strategy seems to have been adopted that is arguably masking the true national spread of the virus. From the first reported case of COVID-19 in Bangladesh on March 8 until March 28, 1,068 samples were tested by the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) in Dhaka.2 The IEDCR was the sole institute in Bangladesh with testing facilities for COVID-19 until March 26, when a second facility was given testing rights. Centralized testing in these unresourced public institutions has been unable to effectively respond to the wave of suspected COVID-19 patients. Even at this initial stage with limited confirmed cases, busy telephone hotlines and lack of timely testing for symptomatic patients raised concerns regarding Bangladesh’s preparedness. In addition, the Bangladesh government has not sought to proactively limit community transmission from primary cases thus far. With a population of 161 million and a total of 1,169 ICU beds,3 this inadequate strategy could potentially devastate Bangladesh’s health system with multiple outbreaks. This risk is compounded by thousands of Bangladeshi workers returning from COVID-19–struck countries and poor adherence to self-quarantine recommendations due to limited education and monitoring mechanisms. This situation is particularly problematic for Bangladesh because a significant portion of returning workers (ie, significant sources of SARS-CoV-2) reside in rural areas outside Dhaka and thus carry the virus to some of the most vulnerable and ill-equipped communities. This situation was likely worsened by the government declaring a 10-day holiday without travel restrictions from March 26 to April 5, which encouraged millions of city workers to leave Dhaka and return to their rural communities.4

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We believe that Bangladesh has lacked coordinated policy decision and enforcement measures to curtail COVID-19 transmission thus far. We urge policy makers to follow WHO guidance and observe other countries’ experiences, which point to a strategy of acting decisively, quickly, and early, well before case numbers reach a crisis level for containment. We believe Bangladesh has not yet reached this point, so urgent implementation of a coordinated policy may prevent a spike in cases that is likely to stretch Bangladesh’s health system well beyond its capacity.

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COVID-19: Protecting Healthcare Workers is a priority

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To the Editor—We very much appreciated the letter by Zhou et al1 regarding the protection of Chinese healthcare workers (HCWs) while fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors recognized that the lack of awareness and training, the shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE), and the lack of point-of-care diagnostic tests for were the most important sources of viral spread. In Italy, more infections among HCWs have been recognized than in China. As of April 5, 2020, 12,252 HCWs in Italy had tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, comprising 10% of recorded cases.2 As of April 5, 2020, 12,252 HCWs in Italy had tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, comprising 10% of recorded cases.2 As of April 5, 2020, 12,252 HCWs in Italy had tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, comprising 10% of recorded cases.2; furthermore, 80 medical doctors and 25 nurses had died. Notably, official figures probably underestimate the real impact of COVID-19 on Italian HCWs because many have not been tested and a large majority of coronavirus infections do not result in symptoms or remain paucisymptomatic.3 In Italy, HCWs are facing the same issues that Zhou highlighted in Chinese hospitals. SARS-CoV-2 has a high transmissibility rate in indoor environments and, therefore, asymptomatic patients admitted to hospitals without respiratory symptoms have probably spread the virus to unaware and unprotected HCWs. These HCWs have, in turn, infected other patients, visitors, and staff, further amplifying viral transmission. It is well-known that a hospital may amplify an epidemic and that epidemics may overwhelm a hospital’s capacity to deliver healthcare services.4 Therefore, in addition to general lockdown and social distancing measures, protecting HCWs is a priority in alleviating the burden on the hospitals.

However, in the absence of effective therapies or a vaccination, before the onset of further COVID-19 waves, it is important to relocate the public health emergency response from the hospitals to other locations by integrating the hospital into an overall epidemic response.4 In this regard, communication and mass-media information campaigns for the public are crucial.

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