

Are we able to Prevent Future Pandemics? A Lesson from Covid-19 Pandemic

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Human faced a lot of pandemics, and WHO has a definition as well as regulations for different phases of pandemic. The aim of this commentary is giving an attention of the value to change these current definitions and regulations hoping to save people in the future and stop global spread of any infection. Outbreak of a novel corona virus was reported in China on December 2019. Sooner, a global spread was reported and WHO announced a public health emergency of international concern on 30 January 2020. WHO

declared it as a pandemic on 11 March 2020.

If the current definitions and regulations of pandemic are changed, a global cooperative and supportive actions must be announced by secretary general of UN in any future health hazards with a possible global pandemic. Including support for global health care, economical support and local action plan to control outbreaks at site with UN support both medical and financial aiming to prevent further spread worldwide.

INTRODUCTION

Outbreak of a novel corona virus was reported in China on December 2019. Sooner, a global spread was reported and WHO declared a public health emergency of worldwide concern on 30 January 2020. WHO declared it as a pandemic on 11 March 2020 [1].

According to WHO regulations about pandemics, there are 5 phases for pandemic announcement including: Predominantly animal infections; few human infections (phases 1-3), continued human-to-human transmission (phase 4), widespread human infections (phases 5 and 6 of pandemic), recurrent episodes (post-peak), seasonal activity (post-pandemic) [2].

According to WHO, actions that should be taken by WHO and national authorities are; At the global, regional, national, and sub-national levels, actions done during phases 1-3 are focused at enhancing pandemic preparedness and response capacities. During phase 4, the main

goal is to delay the spread of the new virus within a limited area. Phases 5-6 involve shifting focus from preparedness to response at a global level to reduce the impact of a pandemic. The post-peak period focuses on addressing health and social impacts of the pandemic and preparing for future pandemic waves. It is important to restore normal health and social functions in the post-pandemic period while addressing the long-term health and social effects of the pandemic [3].

In covid-19 the time period from declaration of WHO of public health emergency of worldwide concern to declaration of pandemic was about 41 days. What happened during this period was a global sustained spread of a fatal new disease with collapse of the available health services even in Europe and the states.

Regulations taken by WHO after declaration of a public health emergency of worldwide concern included an acknowledgement of the risk the virus poses to countries.

beyond its origin in China and of the need for a more coordinated international response to the outbreak. In making the announcement, WHO leaders urged countries not to restrict travel or trade to China because closing borders according to current WHO regulation is not a part of action linked to this announcement [4].

The WHO continues to advise against placing travel or trade restrictions on countries experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks because limited movement of people and goods is usually ineffective and diverts resources away from other intervention. In addition, restrictions may disrupt both the delivery of aids and technical support, and businesses, resulting in negative economic and social effects on affected countries. However, restricting the movement of people may prove temporarily useful in situations with few international connections and limited response capabilities [5].

The actions include a lot of efforts but does not (encourage) border closure. A successful Phase 4 of WHO's pandemic action could result in valuable time to implement interventions, including the use of vaccines, so closing borders during this phase will be crucial. We see the closure of borders will stop further global spread but must be linked with outstanding effort to encourage international assistance to resource-poor countries and/or seriously affected countries.

Until the September 2021, the number of positive cases reported globally for COVID-19 exceeds 235, 67 million and the total officially recorded deaths are nearly 4,814,651 according to the last WHO epidemiologic update (<https://covid19.who.int/table>) [6].

Furthermore, SARS-CoV-2 will continue to evolve as it circulates, and as more variants develop, the more chances they have of evolving [7]. Now, Reducing the transmission of the new SARS-CoV-2 Variants of Concern (VOCs) and Variants of Interest (VOIs) is a great challenge.

The current situation is a serious one, and many questions are raised,

Are we able to prevent future pandemics?

Do we have to change the WHO action plan linked to announcement public health emergency of worldwide concern to include closure of borders of affected country?

No one knows what date this pandemic will end. On the other hand, the current situation of total

number of deaths, the economic burden of pandemic and the collapsed health services during the spread of the pandemic as well as outstanding efforts in vaccine development and global vaccination to control the pandemic, is a great burden.

If the current definitions and regulations of pandemic are changed, a global cooperative and supportive actions must be announced by secretary general of UN in any future health hazards with a possible global pandemic. Including support for global health care, economical support and local action plan to control outbreaks at site with UN support both medical and financial aiming to prevent further spread worldwide.

Is it possible to change the future and prevent a global pandemic and death by accepting the idea for change the WHO current definitions and regulations?

I hope so.

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