

Correspondence

Give what is due: the need to prioritize healthcare workers in response to COVID-19 pandemic

ABSTRACT

In a recent correspondence published in this journal, the need to prioritize healthcare workers by the government must be considered. Various negative effects were seen from non-prioritization of healthcare workers. With this, healthcare workers heed distress calls affecting their physical and mental well-being. If prioritization is given and initiatives are done, the needs of healthcare workers will be sufficed so that they will be working at maximum to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

Keywords COVID-19, government initiatives, healthcare workers, well-being

Main finding of this study

Healthcare workers have been on the spotlight in response to the recent pandemic. They play a vital role in treating patients, identifying the nature of the disease and controlling the spread of the virus. However, their personal and family's lives have been at stake being in the frontline services.

What is already known on this topic

In a recent correspondence, the need to prioritize healthcare workers must be highlighted and must be given with utmost attention by the government to respond efficaciously to COVID-19 patients.¹ Without prioritization, negative and injurious effects are seen as a result. In a comprehensive literature review currently conducted, there is an increased mortality among doctors and other healthcare workers that has been related to COVID-19. Various factors have been studied such as age, gender and specialty. The lack of information and training in response to COVID-19 has also been an underlying factor making most healthcare workers unprepared. However, this disease is still evolving. Other factors were recommended to be studied in protection of the healthcare workers.²

What this study adds

The healthcare workers in the Philippines heed for distress calls as revealed in another correspondence published. It was found out that the healthcare system reached above the

maximum capacity. In turn, healthcare workers experienced physical weakness and even emotional distress.³ If the healthcare workers lack physical and mental well-being, the response to COVID-19 would be diminished. Besides personal well-being, healthcare workers were not given the payment they deserve for the services they render. Labor union of a state-run hospital hold protests to seek the government's initiative in releasing hazard pays promised 6 months ago as of this writing. But the Department of Health gave statement of assurance to the healthcare workers of the funds being sourced out to receive it immediately.⁴

In conclusion, healthcare workers need to be prioritized in terms of physical, mental and financial support. Initiatives and healthcare policies must be done and strengthened to suffice in the needs of front liners in response to the pandemic mitigating its spread. The Philippines must always see other countries' practices and prioritization to their healthcare workers. As Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, World Health Organization (WHO) Director General said, 'The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded all of us of the vital role health workers play to relieve suffering and save lives.'⁵

Limitations of this study

This correspondence does not review all existing policies and guidelines supporting the healthcare workers. As such, it is recommended to be reviewed.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest in this paper.

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