

## COVID-19 and Health Promoting Hospitals in Iran; What do We Stand?

To the editor:

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has been spreading globally since December 2019. At the early pandemic, progressive affected patients and healthcare indicated a lack of proper protective measures and reflected the need for reassessment in the healthcare system and protective measures.<sup>[1]</sup> After the worldwide spread of COVID-19, extensive changes have been seen in healthcare systems, including changes in hospital admission patterns, increasing virtual visits due to social distancing, patients' fear of getting infected with COVID-19 in the hospital environment, and advancing health education for people. Improving people's health through health education is one of the most significant roles of any government, which helps in disease prevention, health promotion, and overall development. In addition, it was observed that medical procedures alone could not ensure better health because our health is affected by several extrinsic factors, including the socioeconomic status of a community and political forces; therefore, health education and health promotion measures are responsible for educating people about their health and its determinants.

Globally, healthcare systems have majorly focused on "sick care" than health promotion or prevention. However, health promotion should be considered as the center of attention, considering the increasing trend of noncommunicable diseases and the possible infectious disease outbreak (such as COVID-19). In this regard, the international network of health-promoting hospitals (HPH) was established by the World Health Organization (WHO) in the early 1990s. HPH program provides comprehensive and well-designed medical services for healthcare providers, patients, the hospital environment, and the community, resulting in health promotion.<sup>[2]</sup> In fact, in the COVID-19 pandemic era, HPH plays a critical role in health promotion due to increased attention to COVID-19 and the marginalization of other health issues.

The HPH program includes benefits such as decreased rehospitalization, improved patients' quality of life, and decreased health costs.<sup>[3,4]</sup> The HPH program is also responsible for patient education toward health issues, which is permissive for COVID-19. Indeed, several precautionary measures have been established for the community for prevention against COVID-19; moreover, a vast budget in each country has been dedicated to educating people against COVID-19. However, the HPH program,

which includes significant groups in society, including patients, nurses, physicians, and their families, can contribute to educating people in this regard. On the other hand, our country is under several political and economic sanctions, which pose limitations for us, and the health organizations in Iran cannot follow WHO instructions such as lockdowns and strict quarantining as other countries.<sup>[5]</sup> This issue strengthens the importance of health education and promotion in the Iranian community.

Currently, more than 590 medical centers worldwide have joined the HPH program; however, the number of HPHs is low in our country. To date, seven medical centers in Iran have joined the HPH program. More efforts in the following years should be considered to have more HPHs in Iran. We assume that more HPHs can prepare us for best management against unpredictable conditions such as disease outbreaks.

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There are no conflicts of interest.

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