

Two Dangerous Thresholds in People's Encounter with COVID-19: Fear and Apathy

Dear Editor,

The new coronavirus was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization in December 2019 following an outbreak of the severe respiratory disease in Wuhan, China, and as the disease progressed worldwide in March 2020.^[1] The disease spread to all countries of the world in May 2020, and the data published by the World Health Organization showed more than 4 million confirmed cases and more than 287 thousand deaths in the world; also, there were 112,000 confirmed cases and more than 6,700 deaths in Iran.^[2]

The actions of countries around the world to detect vaccines, treat patients, care for and diagnose them, quarantine measures, and a set of measures to prevent the progression of the disease and its further spread have been much discussed. But what is the place of psychological actions in this disease?

In addition to the fact that psychological actions in the medical staff, patients, and their families should be considered, one issue has been neglected, and that is psychological actions at the community level in order to prevent the spread of the disease. The behavior of people in any society is different from the problem that afflicts that community and threatens their lives, but the way people in Iran deal with this disease is very thought-provoking! The way people are treated includes two groups, including people with severe fear and panic and people who are indifferent to the statistics of illnesses and deaths and do not believe it.

In the first category, such a situation has led to the influx of pharmacies to supply masks, disinfectants, and alcohol, and most people do not learn how to use the mask or how to use disinfectants. They are either unfamiliar with it or use it improperly. The second group, who have an indifference to the disease as their top priority, have not touched the severity of the disease and travel easily in cities, and are practically the opposite of the first group. The first group has caused terror in the society with their activities, and the second group is doing its job by presenting humorous and simplistic material about the disease. These two thresholds are both problematic and dangerous in dealing with the disease. The first makes the problem too big and the second too small and practically closes the way to deal with the disease in society, so it is necessary in the Covid-19 crisis and other diseases that affect society to deal with that problem by performing psychological

actions. Through these actions, the mental and behavioral status of the two groups under discussion can be brought to normal. Eventually, we will see a rational response by the people against this disease, along with better management by health officials.

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**Mohammad-Rafi Bazrafshan,
Masoud Mohammadi¹**

Department of Nursing, School of Nursing, Larestan University of Medical Sciences, Larestan, ¹Cellular and Molecular Research Center, Gerash University of Medical Sciences, Gerash, Iran

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Masoud Mohammadi,

School of Nursing and Midwifery, Isar Sq., Kermanshah, Iran.

E-mail: masoud.mohammadi1989@yahoo.com

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