

LETTER

# Priorities for global health community in COVID-19 pandemic

Dear Editor,


The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), with more than 13 000 deaths in more than 130 countries all across the globe till March 23, 2020. The global health community has to take action to slow its continued spread and reduce the ever increasing mortality. The action needs to be multipronged requiring financial, legislative, and executive action that will require participation from all segments of the society including the government and the citizens [1,2].

Health care institutions and policy makers developed various plans during the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) epidemic in 2003 and H5N1 epidemic of 2005, which can be refined and utilized in this pandemic. These plans mainly addressed the issues of protection of health care professionals, the sudden surge in patient numbers, and patient management with limited resources [3]. The foremost priority for the health community will be preparation of the hospitals and the clinics for the sudden high-volume patient inflow that will require preparing protocols for triaging and segregating patients in the emergency departments so that COVID-19 patients do not mix with the "regular" patients and transmit the infection. Prevention of nosocomial infection should be another priority that was a major issue in China [4]. This will require framing of specialized protocols and training of the medical staff and adequate supply of personal protective equipment. Proper availability, utilization, and maintenance of ventilators, as well as simplified protocols for nonexpert physicians should be yet another priority for the health community that can be difficult in the developing world [5]. The physicians treating the patients in all parts of the world also need to keep aware of any recent advancement in therapeutic options. With thousands of health care workers infected with SARS-CoV-2 and multiple reported deaths of physicians, an important issue remains the development of procedures for a proper protection of health care workers at any level of patient care, not only for management of confirmed infections. Another major area of concern is the availability of diagnostic testing facilities, which are needed in large numbers and at the point of care. Public health experts need to expand testing to all patients who have unexplained acute respiratory distress syndrome or severe pneumonia, and ultimately to patients who have mild symptoms.

An important goal of the global health community is to diminish the spread and flatten the peak of the epidemic curve. To achieve this goal, it becomes imperative for the authorities to educate the public regarding the various aspects of disease transmission which needs to be done quickly to confront the disease.


## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no potential conflict of interest.

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We confirm that the manuscript has been read and approved by all the authors, that the requirements for authorship as stated earlier in this document have been met and that each author believes that the manuscript represents honest work.

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