

War and COVID-19: A Double Burden for Syrian's who Lack the Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 pandemic has overshadowed the conflict faced by Syria. This short commentary aims to provide views on studies published on the topic of "COVID-19 knowledge, attitude, and practice among Syrians". Recommendations deduced include maximizing awareness campaigns, providing free tests to civilians, lowering national costs, and disseminating vaccines to all.

Keywords: Syria; Commentary; War; Pandemic

DESCRIPTION

Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19) is like fire, ferociously seeking out its fuel, human hosts, and will keep spreading until sufficient herd immunity or the targeted uptake of vaccines is reached. 22 March 2020, Syria announced its first confirmed case, with numbers steeply rising as the virus continues to penetrate deep within the country [1]. Despite this, it's known that those detected and reported are only a small fraction of the true figures [2]. As a result of the ominous situation, the Syrian government imposed a harsh draconian lockdown. Unbending measures were adopted to halt the spread: closing borders, restricting travel between rural and urban parts, shutting down educational facilities, restaurants, and mosques, and implementing a nationwide curfew of varying degrees. The battle against COVID-19 entered its third wave in Syria [3,4]. This wave carries greater numbers of children and adolescents, unlike the previous ones [2]. This short commentary aims to provide further opinions on studies published on the topic of "COVID-19 knowledge, attitude, and practice among Syrians" [5,6].

In war-torn Syria, the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic has overshadowed the civil war, lasting over a decade, leaving an ominous atmosphere as to what may lurk ahead. Whilst there has been a reduction in violence and repression in the majority of Syria, the economic collapse continues to be the essence of humanitarian requirements. Destruction of homes, hyperinflations, and lack of electricity has suppressed all basic

requirements-leaving only survival instincts [7]. Alarming, psychological problems have been documented at sky-high numbers, depression 83.4% and anxiety 69.6% [8]. As to the state of Syria, the global COVID-19 awareness campaign seemed not to have influenced the Syrians knowledge, practice, and attitudes. Modest COVID-19 knowledge and practice scores were identified at the beginning of the outbreak [5,6]. The most adopted social attitudes were quarantine for travelers, closure of educational facilities, and travel ban. However, negative attitudes were reported with regards to COVID-19 infected individuals not having the right to marriage and lack of faith/religion as the cause of the pandemic. Wearing face masks and keeping interpersonal distance were poorly practiced all over Syria [6]. Not surprisingly in a country suffering from severe transportation difficulties, housing, and economic crisis where buying a mask is considered welfare in low-income families [9]. This should raise health concerns where the whole population is at risk of contagion, and plan to minimize the risk of further infections and deaths until we know how the vaccine will control the pandemic.

In government-controlled areas, intensive care beds, testing, and availability of efficient treatment are lacking and costly for Syrians [10]. Therefore, urging the public to adhere to preventive measures is pivotal. This can only be achieved through maximizing awareness campaigns, providing free tests to civilians, lowering national costs, and disseminating vaccines to all.

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CONCLUSION

The prolonged conflict embedded within the COVID-19 pandemic is a grotesque period for the citizens of Syria who lack the knowledge, attitude, and practice. Further studies are required to assess the situation and needs of Syrians and to plan a strategic approach to find solutions to these misfortunes faced. A paucity of Syrian studies is a drastic problem, rewards, funding, and support should be administered to researchers to help grow the Syrian research community; thus, enriching the literature. Syria on its own cannot dream to achieve this goal, which is why we plea for help on behalf of all who are suffering and enduring unimaginable circumstances within the country.

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS

FM conceptualized the study, participated in the design, wrote the study protocol, and drafted the paper. BB, MOA, and HA drafted the paper. BS revised the draft. All authors read and approved the final draft.

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