

Saudi Arabia an Ambassador to Conquer COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by the novel corona virus emerged in China end last quarter of the past year, where so called (2019-nCoV). This virus is highly contagious and spreads easily from human to human or through touching contaminated places. It is responsible for the unexpected outbreak across many countries and regions worldwide. With the major challenges that the governments and healthcare systems are facing during the pandemic. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) government moved decisively and proactively taking immediate protective and precautionary measures to ensure the safety of its citizens and residents. Making all efforts at the individual level as well as healthcare and educational levels, to contain the spread of COVID-19. Moreover, Saudi Arabia gathers all powers to battle COVID-19 nationally, regionally and globally. However, with people's awareness and commitment following the directive measures, KSA will be able to conquer the pandemic and control the crisis.

Keywords: COVID-19; Precautionary measures; Proactive efforts

Introduction

Corona virus disease (COVID) is an infectious illness caused by a novel strain of corona virus. It has emerged in Wuhan city in China late in 2019, and WHO used the interim name 2019-nCoV. Thereafter, it has caused the recent outbreak pandemic respiratory disease, hence called (COVID-19) [1]. At the time, corona virus is attacking more than 200 countries around the world [2,3].

Coronaviruses family had been known to cause the common cold MERS; Middle East Respiratory Syndrome and the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome; SARS [3]. In 2020, the new virus family member looks like SARS, and is called the SARS corona virus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) that is the COVID-19. Although it has lower severity and mortality than SARS [4], its severity ranged from mild respiratory illness in most healthy people, which does not require special care or treatment. However, it can cause a serious disease in immune-compromised patients like those with an underlying health condition, in addition to old age people [2,5]. The ministry of health (MOH) and the world health organization (WHO) revealed that patient with medical problems such as chronic respiratory disease, chronic asthma, cardiac disease, uncontrolled diabetes, and oncology patients are more vulnerable to develop critical complications. This might require a special kind of healthcare, optimal treatment, and might lead to death in some cases [2,6].

COVID-19 symptoms, transmission and prevention

The exact mechanism of viral spread is not yet definite. Yet, the Saudi Arabia MOH is working alongside with WHO and other world health experts to discover the pathophysiology, the behaviour of COVID-19 and the reasons behind the infection rate trend. Originally, COVID-19 is zoonotic, though it can spill over transmitting it into humans and eventually causes human-to-human infection [2]. Likewise any influenza virus, COVID-19 symptoms include body aches, fatigue, sore throat, running nose, dry cough, fever and

shortness of breath [2,3]. It could present as a common harmless flue to a bad cold [7].

The main problem of COVID-19 in comparison to SARS and MERS-CoV lies in being highly contagious, transitive and spreads very fast between people [3,4]. Primarily, the virus spreads via infected persons droplets, saliva or nasal discharge during sneezing or coughing of an infected patient. COVID-19 is the largest among other RNA viruses, it is heavier than remaining in the air for more than seconds, it falls directly into the floor, surfaces and can last for hours [8]. Hence, the best way to slow down the spread of this virus, and preventing the transmission, is through taking all precautions as recommended by the MOH. Keeping a distance of around 2 meters, frequent hand washing, alcohol based hand rubbing, and avoiding touching your face. Moreover, practicing respiratory etiquette, for instance coughing into a flexed elbow or using clean tissue and directly disposing it. Wearing a facial mask if experiencing any symptoms, dealing with or taking care of a positive infected patient, will definitely limit the infection [1,3].

Public health groups, including Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as well as WHO are monitoring the pandemic they issued guidelines to confront the crisis and prevent outbreak. Until the moment, there is no specific vaccine or potential anti-viral drug for the COVID-19 treatment. However, many worldwide clinical trials are going on, several of which are really promising. In fact, some people might not have symptoms while others present with symptoms in 3 to 14 days of infection (the window period). The asymptomatic and those who did not develop symptoms yet can unfortunately spread the infection to all people they contact with. Therefore, till the appropriate treatment is available, the most effective way in preventing the spread would be through social and physical distancing, at the individual level [1,3].

As a result of exponential increase in the positive COVID-19 cases and fatality rate, many countries around the world are applying every possible preparedness activity and preventive measures recommended by public health group [9]. Apparently, KSA government is moving decisively and proactively taking immediate precautionary measures to

ensure safety of citizens and residents. Making all efforts to overcome the unprecedented crisis and contain the spread of COVID-19, while protecting governmental facilities and agencies to ensure the continuity of their tasks.

At the national level

As other countries around the world, Saudi government took a wise decision of travel suspension including domestic and international flights. As well, inter-urban bus transportations, railway and taxi services within the Kingdom were also deferred until further notice. Besides locking down all operations in many governmental zones and commercial centres, in addition to closure of school and any gathering places. Saudi Arabia declared the most important restrictive measures that is to stay at home to mimic the spread, while ensuring the continuous availability of food and medicine supplies. Nonetheless, the two holy mosques in Mecca and Madinah Principality were closed and the Umrah event is banned to avoid the spread through a mass of people. The highest incidence rate cities within KSA were subjected to quarantine, while the curfew period was extended in all over the Kingdom until the situation is controlled [10,11]. As to inspire compelling to these measures, KSA government activated numerous online applications to deliver the food and medicine to homes limiting the unnecessary movements.

At the healthcare level

Saudi government provided all appropriate supplies for the healthcare sector to deliver the necessary health services, in addition to the resources for infection control, prevention and treatment. Furthermore, the Kingdom of humanity offered to cover all medical expenses to treat all coronavirus patients who resides in the Kingdom. The Saudi armed forces have also joined in competing the COVID-19 crisis by setting up mobile hospitals supplied with advanced equipment and qualified medical teams in various cities. Other military efforts included early detection by triaging and filtering cases prior to their admission to main hospitals [12].

Whereas, all confirmed positive cases underwent quarantine in well-equipped health institutes with full coverage of treatment and care services. The government has shown extreme care to travellers returning back to KSA, as they are not permitted to enter the kingdom unless they are quarantined for 14 days in high standard hotels with full coverage of residential, healthcare and food services, until declared corona virus free. Saudi Arabia is very considerate about its citizens residing in foreign countries for either education or business purpose. It took care of them via providing with homing, healthcare and other services in those countries until the government facilitate their return to homeland safely. All Saudi students with scholarships to foreign countries were provided with substantial care services correspondingly as directed by Saudi embassy [10,13].

At an international level

The Kingdom via the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques has lead international efforts to battle the novel COVID-19 pandemic. Through its presidency of the G20 summit in assembling international preparedness to combat and confront the outbreak, while addressing the coronavirus impact on the global economy. Saudi Arabia showed willingness to learn from China's experience of contesting the pandemic [14]. Moreover, Saudi Arabia from across the humanitarian sector initiate donating money to the deprived countries [15], beside

what it offered to the people affected by the curfew within Saudi Arabia itself.

At the educational level

The ministry of education in KSA encourages the utilization of information communications technology (ICT) in education to facilitate a distance learning vision. Virtual school and e-learning have been activated at all educational levels and in all provinces, and offered for free during the suspension period as an alternative learning method. Nevertheless, with Kingdom generousness, free computers were offered to those who are in need. "EduNation" is an advanced digital platform designed to assess learning, providing the appropriate tools for both students and educators, with a high social interaction with each other and with parents. Additionally, this platform is a trusted partner and ideal for higher education and international curricula as well [16].

Conclusion

The government of Saudi Arabia represented by the custodian of the two holy mosques has applied all possible preventive measures to contain the COVID-19 outbreak. Aiming to protect both citizens and residents from such unprecedented global pandemic witnessed worldwide. It has provided the indispensable financial needs to support the healthcare provision as well as educational sectors, besides preserving the economic level security to all. Honestly, at this challenging crisis, Saudi Arabia gathers all powers to battle COVID-19 nationally, regionally and globally. Certainly with people commitment and following the directive precautions and preventive measures, KSA will be able to conquer the pandemic and control the situation, God willing.

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