

KN95 masks from China unusable

Says Canada AFP, Montreal

The Canadian government said Friday that one million KN95 masks imported from China did not meet its strict standards and so could not be distributed to frontline health workers amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The Public Health Agency of Canada "has identified approximately one million KN95 masks as non-compliant with specifications for healthcare settings," a spokesman said.

"These items were not distributed to provinces and territories for frontline health care response, and are being subsequently assessed for use in non-healthcare settings," he said.

Chinese model KN95 masks are similar to N95 masks, as well as the FFP2 model used in Europe.



People hold signs during a protest against the coronavirus shutdown in front of State Capitol in Madison, Wisconsin, on Friday. Gyms, hair salons and tattoo parlors had a green light to reopen in the US state of Georgia on Friday as the death toll from the coronavirus pandemic soared past 50,000 in the US. PHOTO: AFP

More than a lung disease

NY doctors try new ways as patients show new signs

AGENCIES

As the novel coronavirus spread through New York City in late March, doctors at Mount Sinai Hospital noticed something strange happening to patients' blood.

Signs of blood thickening and clotting were being detected in different organs by doctors from different specialties. This would turn out to be one of the alarming ways the virus ravages the body, as doctors there and elsewhere were starting to realise.

At Mount Sinai, nephrologists noticed kidney dialysis catheters getting plugged with clots. Pulmonologists monitoring COVID-19 patients on mechanical ventilators could see portions of lungs were oddly bloodless. Neurosurgeons confronted a surge in their usual caseload of strokes due to blood clots, the age of victims skewing younger, with at least half testing positive for the virus.

"It's very striking how much this disease causes clots to form," Dr J Mocco, a Mount Sinai neurosurgeon, said in an interview, describing how some doctors think COVID-19, the illness caused by the coronavirus, is more than a lung disease.

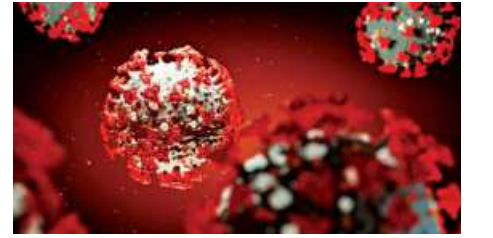
In some cases, Mocco said, a stroke was a young patient's first symptom of COVID-19.

As colleagues from various specialties pooled their observations, they developed a new treatment protocol. Patients now receive high doses of a blood-thinning drug even before any evidence of clotting appears.

"Maybe, just maybe, if you prevent the

clotting, you can make the disease less severe," said Dr David Reich, the hospital president. The new protocol will not be used on certain high-risk patients because blood thinners can lead to bleeding in the brain and other organs.

In the three weeks beginning mid-March, Mocco saw 32 stroke patients with large blood clots in the brain, double the usual number for that period.



Five were unusually young, under age 49, with no obvious risk factors for strokes, "which is crazy," he said. "Very, very atypical." The youngest was only 31.

At least half of the 32 patients would test positive for COVID-19, Mocco said.

As their wards began to overflow with COVID-19 patients, the Mount Sinai doctors read papers describing similar findings from doctors in China's Hubei province and other hard-hit areas, and discussed them with their peers in phone calls and webinars.

The American Society of Hematology, which has also noted the clotting, says in its guidance to physicians that the benefits of the blood-thinning therapy for COVID-19 patients not already showing signs of clotting are "currently unknown."

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC LATEST UPDATES

DEATH TOLL NEARS 200,000 The death toll from the novel coronavirus pandemic rose to 197,871 yesterday, according to a tally from Johns Hopkins University yesterday at 1200GMT. More than 2,826,904 declared cases have been registered in 193 countries and territories. In US, the death toll stood at 51,949. Italy is the next most-affected country with 25,969 deaths. It is followed by Spain with 22,524 fatalities, France with 22,279 deaths and Britain with 19,567 deaths.

51,000 DEATHS IN US The death toll in the United States surpassed 51,000 amid more than 890,000 cases. But the number of daily deaths in New York has gone down, with 422 reported on Friday - the lowest since April 1. Meanwhile, China reported it has not had a new death from the virus in 10 days.

NO DEATHS IN CHINA FOR 10 DAYS China has reported no new deaths from the coronavirus in the last ten days, as attention has turned to northern provinces bordering Russia. The vast majority of new cases in the country have been imported, according to health authorities.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

India, Pakistan ease curbs

Allow limited opening of small businesses amid lockdown

REUTERS, New Delhi/Islamabad

The Indian government allowed a limited reopening of shops in neighbourhoods and residential areas from Saturday, more than a month after the nation went into a lockdown to curb the spread of the coronavirus, officials said.

Late on Friday the federal home ministry said retail shops could start operations with the staff number reduced by 50%, while also requiring appropriate social distancing, wearing of masks and gloves during work.

The sale of liquor and other non-essential items will continue to be prohibited, and no shops in large market places, multi-brand and single-brand malls will be allowed to open for business till May 3.

India has reported 24,506 cases of the coronavirus and 775 deaths, with authorities setting up new teams to focus on compliance and implementation of lockdown measures.

In neighbouring Pakistan, the government extended the nationwide lockdown till May 9. However, it is switching to a so-called "smart lockdown" from Saturday for targeted tracking and tracing of cases while allowing some industrial and commercial activities to begin under safety guidelines.

"Isolating these cases and their contacts will improve our ability to contain the disease alongside allowing the economy to function and people to get employment," said Asad Umar,



Pakistan's planning minister, who also oversees the coronavirus national response body.

"This upcoming month of Ramadan will be decisive," he said, emphasising that adhering to the government's virus containment measures will enable the further re-starting of parts of the economy.

Prayer congregations for Ramadan have also been allowed in Pakistan with the exception of the southern province of Sindh, where doctors have warned the virus could spread rapidly.

In Karachi, the capital of Sindh and Pakistan's largest city, most mosques were closed to the public for the Ramadan evening prayer gatherings, which began on Friday.

As of Saturday, Pakistan reported 11,940 cases of infections, including 253 deaths.

Gasping for oxygen

FROM PAGE 1 outside of medical colleges, there are 13,745 cylinders. In Kurmitola General Hospital, there are 450 cylinders, and in Kuwait Maitree Hospital, there are 123 cylinders," she said, adding that even though there is no central oxygen supply in these hospitals, there would be no problem.

However, healthcare workers and patients alike are finding this to be a major problem.

A central oxygen supply means having a dedicated place in the hospital where oxygen is stored and supplied to all patient beds, using lines in the wall. There are staffers who monitor how much oxygen the storage chamber has and make sure that patients are not out of oxygen.

Doctors said the problem with cylinders is that they need to be constantly monitored by doctors or nurses to see if there is enough left or if it has been properly refilled.

This was proving to be an issue in coronavirus-dedicated hospitals because of acute mismanagement and manpower shortage, while also increasing the chances of a patient dying.

Bikash Saha was already in need of serious medical attention when he was admitted to Kurmitola General Hospital on April 18. He had been referred to Kurmitola from a hospital in Khanpur, Narayanganj.

He started having difficulty breathing around midnight, and his wife could not manage to get oxygen for him until three hours later. The family, however, claimed the cylinder may not have been working.

Anirban Saha, son of the patient, said, "There were no doctors or nurses at the ward. They were stationed elsewhere, but nowhere near the ward. There was no way to contact them because attendants cannot go out of the wards themselves. The only way to call the nurses is through the Ansar men guarding the entrance to the floor. My mother was at the hospital as my father's attendant, and she asked the guards several times to call a nurse, but they did not pay any heed."

The nurses finally came and hooked him up to a cylinder and left again. However, Anirban claimed his father had told him that the cylinder was not working. "He had received oxygen earlier during the day and he felt better after taking it. This time the oxygen was not helping him. He still kept having breathing difficulty and kept asking us to call the nurses to check his oxygen."

Anirban's mother went to ask the

guards to call the nurses again several times, but nobody came to see them. "The guards told my mother that since my father has been given oxygen, everything will be okay and we need to have patience," he claimed.

"Around 6:00am, the nurses came to see my father, but my father had died by then.

"Even before the nurses came, my father's fingers and toes were turning blue. He took four or five large breaths and went still," Anirban said.

Similarly, Snigdha Farhana Surovi claimed her father died because he did not get oxygen, the lack of which led to cardiac pain. This incident happened around 12 hours after Bikash Saha died at the same hospital.

Her father, Sohel Rana, had chronic kidney disease and has a pacemaker in his heart. He was admitted on April 17 with the need of emergency dialysis.

"Around 5:00pm on April 19, my mother noticed that my father's oxygen cylinder was empty. She tried to call the nurses but failed to do so for more than one and half hours. My father had developed intense chest pains by then," claimed Surovi.

"Since there is no central oxygen supply like in private hospitals, we have to run after nurses to get oxygen, and there is no direct way to call a nurse from the ward," she said.

"When the nurses finally came and provided him with oxygen, that cylinder too emptied very quickly. After that my mother went to call the nurses again and was able to manage another cylinder only after a similar time interval," she said.

But the chest pain that began while Surovi's mother searched for oxygen, persisted, and he expired later that night. "He was shifted to the ICU at 11:00pm that day. Not a single doctor visited my father when he was taken to the ICU. Around 3:30am, his chest pain and breathing worsened and while my mother pleaded the guards to bring a doctor, nobody came to visit him and he died. It was only a whole hour after his death that a ward assistant dropped by the ICU to see why my mother was crying."

An oxygen cylinder contains 2000 litres of oxygen, said Rubel Ahmed Babu, proprietor of Next Care Surgical, a surgical supply shop on Topkhana Road.

"How a long a canister lasts depend on how much oxygen is being given. A minimum of 3 litres per minute has to be given," he said.

Doctors at Kurmitola General Hospital interviewed by this

correspondent said that at the wards, patients get between six to 10 litres per minute. This means a 2000-litre cylinder lasts between 3.5 to 5.5 hours depending on the patient.

None of the three doctors interviewed agreed to be named because a government directive restricts them from speaking to the media.

They stated that with the kind of patient load they have, oxygen cylinders are emptying out quicker and that empty cylinders at a time of need is something that they are having to contend with.

In addition, the entire staff of the hospital has been divided into three groups, and while one group works, the other stays in quarantine. This means the hospital is running with a third of its staff, and it is impossible to monitor which patient's cylinder is emptying when.

The director of KGH could not be reached over phone.

Other hospitals dedicated to treatment of coronavirus patients do not have central oxygen supply facilities either.

While Dr Shehab Uddin, the superintendent of Kuwait Maitree Hospital, claimed that 123 canisters for the 128 patients currently admitted is enough, the director of Railway General Hospital Dr Firoz Alamgir said that this just means he cannot currently provide critical care.

"I can manage with oxygen cylinders, but I can only take patients who are medium-risk. If their condition deteriorates, I need to refer them to other hospitals with ICUs," said Dr Alamgir.

Director of Lal Kuthi Hospital, Dr Shamsul Karim, also said that the hospital has no central oxygen supply and will be dependent on cylinders.

"I cannot imagine running a hospital without a central oxygen supply. This is mandatory," said Dr ShagufaAnwar, chief of Business Development at United Hospital Ltd. "Cylinders have a limit on how much oxygen can be provided for patients. With the cylinders, I cannot give concentrated oxygen at an increased force to critical patients. Being able to do this means I can delay putting my patient on a ventilator," she said.

Besides, they can go empty at crucial moments and then they have to be refilled by an oxygen supplier outside of the hospital, she added.

Dr Nasrin Sultana of DGHS said that 3,500 more oxygen cylinders are being imported but they have not arrived yet.

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Table with 4 columns: S.N, Description, Price, and Remarks. It lists various packages and services offered by the organization, including medical supplies and services.