

Keep health workers safe to keep patients safe

A charter released recently for World Patient Safety Day, calls on governments and those running health services at local levels to take five actions to better protect health workers.

While health workers represent less than 2-3% of the population in the large majority of countries, around 14% of COVID-19 cases reported to WHO are among health workers. In some countries, the proportion can be as high as 35%.

In addition to physical risks, the pandemic has placed extraordinary levels of psychological stress on health workers exposed to high-demand settings for long hours, living in constant fear of disease exposure while separated from family and facing social stigmatisation.

On World Patient Safety Day, the World Health Organisation (WHO)'s health worker charter calls on all Member States and relevant stakeholders to take steps to:

Establish synergies between health worker safety and patient safety policies and strategies:

- Develop linkages between occupational health and safety, patient safety, quality improvement, and infection prevention and control programmes.
- Include health and safety skills in personal and patient safety into education and training programmes for health workers at all levels.
- Integrate staff safety and patient safety incident reporting and learning systems.



- Develop integrated metrics of patient safety, health worker safety and quality of care indicators, and integrate with health information system.

Develop and implement national programmes for occupational health and safety of health workers:

- Develop and implement national programmes for occupational health for health workers in line with national occupational health and safety policies.
- Review and upgrade, where necessary, national regulations and laws for occupational health and safety to ensure that all health workers have regulatory protection of their health and safety at work.

Protect health workers from violence in the workplace

- Adopt and implement in accordance with national law, relevant policies and mechanisms to prevent and eliminate violence in the health sector.
- Promote a culture of zero tolerance to violence against health workers.
- Review labour laws and other

legislation, and where appropriate the introduction of specific legislation, to prevent violence against health workers.

- Ensure that policies and regulations are implemented effectively to prevent violence and protect health workers.

Improve mental health and psychological well-being

- Establish policies to ensure appropriate and fair duration of deployments, working hours, rest break and minimising the administrative burden on health workers.
- Define and maintain appropriate safe staffing levels within health care facilities.
- Establish a 'blame-free' and just working culture through open communication and including legal and administrative protection from punitive action on reporting adverse safety events.
- Provide access to mental well-being and social support services for health workers, including advice on work-life balance and risk assessment and mitigation.

Protect health workers from physical and biological hazards

- Ensure the implementation of minimum patient safety, infection prevention and control, and occupational safety standards in all health care facilities across the health system.
 - Ensure availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) at all times, as relevant to the roles and tasks performed, in adequate quantity and appropriate fit and of acceptable quality.
 - Ensure adequate environmental services such as water, sanitation and hygiene, disinfection and adequate ventilation at all health care facilities.
 - Ensure vaccination of all health workers at risk against all vaccine-preventable infections, including Hepatitis B and seasonal influenza, following the national immunisation policy, and in the context of emergency response, priority access for health workers to newly licensed and available vaccines.
 - Provide adequate resources to prevent health workers from injuries, and harmful exposure to chemicals and radiations; provide functioning and ergonomically designed equipment and workstations to minimise musculoskeletal injuries and falls.
- Please visit <https://tinyurl.com/y3pd52l3> to learn more about the health worker safety charter.

Source: World Health Organisation (WHO)

HEALTH bulletin



Does a healthy diet counter the ill-effects of obesity?

A healthy quality Mediterranean-like diet partially modifies the association between obesity and cardiovascular mortality, according to a study published recently in PLOS Medicine.

Studies have suggested that other factors, including healthy dietary patterns, might modify the higher risk of CVD associated with higher BMI. In the new study, researchers studied BMI, diet and mortality among 79,003 Swedish adults enrolled in the Swedish Mammography Cohort and Cohort of Swedish Men.

Adherence to a Mediterranean-like diet (mMED) was assessed on a scale of 0 to 8, integrating information on intake of fruits and vegetables, legumes, nuts, unrefined or high-fibre grains, fish, red and processed meat, and olive oil. Over 21 years of follow-up, 30,389 (38% of participants) died. Among overweight individuals, the group with the lowest hazard ratio of all-cause mortality were those with high mMED.

Obese individuals who also had high mMED did not have a significantly higher mortality compared with those with normal weight and high mMED. For CVD mortality, which represented 12,064 of the deaths, the findings were broadly similar.

These results indicate that adherence to healthy diets such as a Mediterranean-like diet may be a more appropriate focus than avoidance of obesity for the prevention of overall mortality.

COVID-19 positive mother and immediate care of newborn

DR ABDULLAHEL AMAAN AND KHAINOOR ZAHAN

Since the emergence of a COVID-19 was not previously seen in humans, there is little data on whether there can be a vertical transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus from a COVID-19 positive pregnant woman to her baby.

Mother to infant transmission includes intrauterine vertical transmission, from maternal blood and amniotic fluid contact during delivery, and postnatal infection, especially during breastfeeding. To confirm whether there is a vertical transmission or not, studies have been carried out to detect SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid in breast milk, cord blood, amniotic fluid, vaginal swab, neonatal throat swab, faeces and urine sample of the newborns. The results showed that all the test samples were negative, suggesting a vertical transmission during pregnancy seems to be unlikely.

Furthermore, infants born to COVID-19 positive mothers may benefit from some degree of passive immune protection at birth from transplacental immunoglobulin G (IgG) acting as a natural form of convalescent plasma transfusion. Even the immune system immaturity may be protective for neonates because much COVID-19 morbidity in older patients appears to be driven by the domino effect of the cytokine storm.

However, infected mothers can transmit the COVID-19 virus through respiratory droplets during breastfeeding. Thus, mothers with known or suspected COVID-19



should be confirmed to adhere to standard contact precautions during breastfeeding.

Since the virus has not been detected in breast milk samples by RT-PCR, therefore health care workers, concerned family members should protect, promote, and support early initiation and sustained breastfeeding in newborn to COVID-19 positive mothers. Breastfeeding has myriad health benefits ranging from decreased risks of breast and ovarian cancer for women to the development of a diverse intestinal microbiome for infants and lower infection risk in the first year of life and thus reducing morbidity and mortality. Breastfeeding creates a unique relationship between mother and child, thus reducing the length of hospital stay and the negative effects linked to quarantine and stress because of this pandemic viral outbreak.

Skin-to-skin contact started in the first hours of life is associated with reduced postpartum haemorrhage risk, decreased rates of postpartum depression and anxiety, and increased proportions of successful breastfeeding.

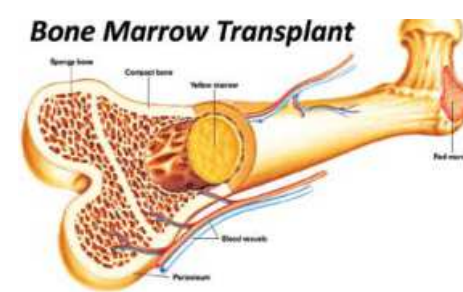
China has adopted an early policy of mother-infant separation for 14 days after birth, and avoidance of breast milk use until the mother has recovered from the infection. The American Academy of Paediatrics suggests the separation of a COVID-19 positive mother from her infant when possible and the use of expressed breast milk rather than breastfeeding. The World Health Organisation (WHO) supports skin-to-skin care, rooming-in, and breastfeeding initiation within an hour of birth for infants born to mothers with COVID-19 like all other newborns and routine newborn care with an added emphasis on respiratory and hand hygiene.

For a country like Bangladesh, experts are emphasising to adopt the consensus guideline of the WHO for a better newborn outcome. Let us promote and encourage exclusive breastfeeding and skin-to-skin contact ensuring proper protective measures to continue our efforts in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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BMT



Bone marrow transplants offered in Dhaka

Evercare Hospital Dhaka has become the first in Bangladesh to perform all kinds of bone marrow transplants (BMTs), using cutting-edge facilities and expert medical staff to provide BMTs to patients at an affordable cost.

Bone marrow transplants consist of 2 types – autologous and allogeneic. High doses of chemotherapy or radiotherapy or combined radio-chemotherapy are used to eradicate the residual malignancy and to create a space in the bone marrow for the donor stem cells to settle. These donor cells grow into the patient's body and give them a new life. Generally, myeloid cancers need only chemotherapy while lymphoid cancers need radio-chemotherapy.

Recently, new cutting-edge facilities for Total Body Irradiation (TBI) were added to help with BMTs for acute lymphocytic leukaemia (ALL), lymphoma and other types of cancers. The hospital is conducting allogeneic BMT for leukaemia, lymphoma and aplastic anaemia and offering scope for thalassaemia and other diseases; while work on autologous BMT continues with 18 successful cases already performed.

The hospital also offers high quality flowcytometry, immunohistochemistry, positron emission tomography (PET) scan, plasma exchange and modern blood bank services.



Yoga in the time of COVID-19

In the modern world where we inhale polluted air, ingest preservative loaded food, toxic media messages and competitive consumer lifestyles, the novel coronavirus has forced us to slow down and rethink our choices. Now more than ever people are realising the need to find a sustainable balance to nurture health and happiness. In this scenario, many people are turning to yoga.

Yoga practice, which includes physical exercise (asanas), mental relaxation (meditation) and breathwork (pranayama) and has many proven benefits for the body, mind and spirit. Yoga can help people heal from injuries and illnesses. It is recommended by doctors as the best way to relieve stress, calm the nerves, increase strength, stamina, flexibility and circulation and boost immunity. Yoga is known to reduce diabetes, heart disease, backaches and depression. Especially now, when people are unable to go to the gym or the park for exercise, yoga at home seems to be the best option.

Shazia Omar, a yoga practitioner in Bangladesh says, "COVID-19 attacks the respiratory tract, making it difficult to breathe. The virus can travel down to the lungs, making it even harder to maintain your breath. Those who have battled COVID-19 and survived, say the best thing you can do to prepare yourself (apart from social distancing and proper hygiene,) is practice breathing techniques to boost your immunity and cleanse your respiratory system."

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Rumors and Misconceptions Unveiled

Can COVID – 19 be transmitted in areas with hot and humid climates?

- The COVID- 19 virus can be transmitted in any climate, including areas with hot and humid weather.

The best and most effective way to protect yourself against COVID-19 is by maintaining physical distance of at least 1 metre from others and frequently cleaning your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or washing them with soap and water.

By doing this you eliminate viruses that may be on your hands and avoid infection that could occur by then touching your eyes, mouth and nose.

Can cold weather kill the new corona virus?

- There is no reason to believe that cold weather can kill the new corona virus or other diseases.

The normal human body temperature remains around 36.5 to 37 °C, regardless of the external temperature or weather.

Public awareness by:



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