

FROM CHALLENGED BEGINNINGS TO STANDING TALL

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State of healthcare and Covid-19 management in Bangladesh

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Below upazilla levels, there are union health centres and union sub centres for out-patient services. The speciality in the system is the community clinics. The community clinics are for 6,000 population in each rural setting and is the last tier of healthcare services.

Though such a unique health system structure is available in Bangladesh, its quality of service is questionable. The

are fever, fatigue, dry cough, loss of appetite, body ache, shortness of breath, mucus which begins two to fourteen hours after exposure to the virus. Apart from these, there might be loss of smell or taste and other symptoms like sore throat, headache, chills, congestion or runny nose, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhoea.

But there may also be some emergency symptoms where hospitalisation or doctor's consultation

includes rash, vomiting, belly pain, and diarrhoea.

The best way to protect from Covid infection is by washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds, using alcohol-based sanitiser, keeping oneself six feet away from others, using mask in public places, avoiding sick people, avoid touching the eyes, nose and mouth without washing the hands.

The Covid-19 virus affects people of all ages but the elderly and people

later get diagnosed in a Covid patient.

When analysing the COVID situation from late 2019, we see initially the Chinese authorities had failed to foresee the gravity and strength of this virus. The actual data of morbidity and mortality was also initially not available. It took a significant amount of time for the state authorities to realise the situation which aided the spread of the virus so rapidly all over the world. There was also not enough scientific evidence available to

lingered longer and longer, and people became frustrated. Some countries prioritised their economy over people's health, undermining the public health measures, eventually paying the price. Some countries with huge population are struggling to maintain social distancing. Cities with a lot of slum dwellers with poor health infrastructure and are burdened with poverty, also faced huge challenges under lockdown.

People are slowly starting to adapt to the situation, and it is now the new normal. The new normal is an interesting term. People were scared initially, but slowly they are being habituated in washing hands, wearing masks and maintaining social distancing. Internet and media have become the solutions for all our activity online, and home services and related business are offering takeaway services. Different web-based channels are doing good business and new ones are emerging. There is more and more demand on packaged food, dry food and tinned food in developed countries. People are getting accustomed and comfortable in the system of working from home. Every now and then, newer apps are launching with better features to communicate online, to purchase online and to do group activities and meetings.

Educational institutes are opening online portals and apps for students to continue their studies. Online curriculums too are now available.

After one year of sufferings if we look back to analyse the management of Covid-19, we can look at Vietnam as an example. "Preparedness to deal infectious disease is a key ingredient for protecting people and securing public health in time of pandemics such as Covid-19" (A UN resident coordinator blog, Vietnam). When in Vietnam there were only 16 cases in a village close to Hanoi, a 3-week village-wide quarantine was employed affecting 11,000 people.

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A woman taking advice from physicians, in hazmat suits, at the ticket counter of the capital's Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, on March 23, 2020.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

healthcare service providers are supposed to properly manage these robust healthcare services, though they are still not able to. The availability of doctors, nurses and other paramedic staff are also continuously being questioned.

Covid-19, like SARS and Swine flu, is also contagious and affects mainly the human respiratory system. Its symptoms

is required. These are difficulty in breathing, pain or pressure on the chest, bluish discoloration of the face/lips and confusion/cluelessness. Stroke has also been reported in some cases of Covid-19. In case of children, common symptoms are fever, cough, and shortness of breath which is called Paediatric Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome (PMIS) and

with underlying diseases are the most vulnerable to it. That's why the hospitals and care homes all over the world have been showing the high morbidity and mortality rate. An interesting thing about the disease, is that it can affect any organ of the body, and researchers are suspecting that there is long term damage in different organs which may

tackle the virus.

To combat this new situation, all the countries called upon their health authorities, doctors, virologists, scientists and infectionologists, but the public health workers were not very involved and were ignored.

Eventually most of the countries issued lockdown. This situation

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