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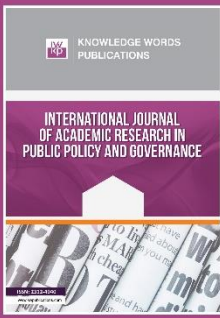
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Covid-19 Outbreak & Response of Emergency Medical Service (Rescue 1122) in Pakistan—Way Forward

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Abstract

The world wide covid-19 outbreak has huge socioeconomic burden globally and the number of cases are increasing drastically. Therefore, the operational planning & response of Emergency Services is significant in designing and implementing an effective approach. Pakistan managed the COVID-19 outbreak exceptionally also acknowledged by World Health Organization. Punjab Emergency Service is the largest pre-hospital emergency care service of Pakistan that responded 7.5 M emergencies from its inception 2004 with an average of 3000 emergencies per day. During COVID -19 outbreak, the Punjab Emergency Service established field hospital for triage the patients and responded 13724 corona patients for shifting to hospitals and quarantine centers followed by 2296 corona burials, 112,409 disinfection sites and over 50,000 Rashaan pack distribution to the needy . In this article the operational and relief activities of Punjab Emergency Service and lesson learned during this pandemic COVID-19 in Punjab (Pakistan) are mentioned. The future direction to effectively cope such hazards are training for the unpredictable to handle these kind of emergencies, leadership & coordination for effective utilization of resources, institutional framework, effective CDC with effective pre-hospital surveillance and efficient pre-hospital Emergency Services.

Keywords: COVID-19, Punjab Emergency Service, Pakistan

Introduction

The Novel Corona Virus was initially found in Wuhan, China but afterwards it spread the whole globe and affect approximately more than 150 countries with its pandemic (Wu, Leung, & Leung, 2020; Zhu & Sarkis, 2004). After its deadly outbreak, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared it a pandemic on 11th March, 2020 and appeal the whole world to do collaborative efforts for preparedness and response to this virus accordingly (World Health Organization., 2020b). Till 11th of March, the outbreak of Coronavirus spread almost 113 countries and states of the world, having 118,162 confirm cases and 4290 registered deaths (mortality rate 3.36%) (World Health Organization., 2020a). Also on 26th February, 2020 the Health Authorities in Pakistan confirmed first two Corona Virus cases in Karachi and Islamabad (Ali, 2020; *Pakistan latest victim of coronavirus*, 2020). In the coming 15 days, the outbreak confirmed 20 new cases, with 14 cases in Sindh, 05 in

Gilgit Baltistan and 1 in Baluchistan. The common cause in spread of this disease is the travel history which confirm that all the patients had a recent visit from Iran, Syria or London. As till 12th March, 2020 the Health Authorities conduct 471 samples, 20 (4.25%) had been found positive (Organziation., 2020) .As the growth rate of this virus is increasing, the health care authorities also increasing their efforts according to the number of patients. The Punjab Emergency Service is the first modern and standardize emergency Service in Pakistan that initially launched as ambulance service as a pilot project in Lahore, 2004 (Control & Prevention, 2020; Guan et al., 2020). After successfully probation period, the service further cultivate in all the remaining 36 districts of the Punjab. It provides all the life care services and operations free of cost under the supervision of Government of the Punjab through a toll free number 1122. This service, which was initially just an ambulance service, is now providing rescue, fire, ambulance, water rescue, community safety and various other emergency services to 80 million people of Punjab and also providing technical assistance to the other provinces of Pakistan (Semple, 2011).

The number of production of infection by a person to others for COVID-19 is 2.2 (95% CI, 1.4 to 3.9) (De Wit, Van Doremalen, Falzarano, & Munster, 2016). The formats of this virus is suspected as the central character in expansion of this virus, as it shows resistance for days on various dirty surfaces (Li et al., 2020). Moreover, positive symptoms of SARS-CoV-2 have also been detected in human excrement, while the serum specimen shows it negative in the same person (De Wit et al., 2016). Spread of this virus into paramedics is a serious threat. In a recent case study, there were 57(41%) patients out of a total number of 138 that were infected inside the hospital premises that include 40(29%) health professionals (Holshue et al., 2020).

Various efforts are continue by most countries to develop vaccination, but World Health Organization (WHO) declares that it's a time taking process that may be completed after a time frame of 18 months (Wang et al., 2020). After various experiments, still no effective antiviral drug has been confirmed as effective cure.

After the rapid growth of Corona Virus in Pakistan, the Punjab Emergency Service initiated the necessary steps by utilizing all its available resources to save the precious lives of the individuals in District Punjab. The Punjab Emergency Service established field hospital for triage the patients and responded 12625 corona patients for shifting to hospitals and quarantine centers followed by 1838 corona burials, 112,409 disinfection sites and over 50,000 Rashan pack distribution to the needy.

Scope of Work

Upon the direction and supervision of the Authority (Director General), the management of all 36 districts of the Punjab were ordered for effective and timely provision and shifting of the Corona patients timely to isolation centers and hospitals. Also, directions were issued to the district in charges for their define roles and responsibilities and mutual coordination with other authorities/stake holders for coordination with the relevant tiers and monitoring of the subjective activity and to nominate their focal person for coordination with health authorities and district administration the cope this pandemic in effective manner.

Rescue 1122 not only performed the duties of the shifting of the patients during COVID-19 but also performed various other activities i.e. community awareness, burial, Rashan distribution and psychosocial support as well.

Methodology

This is descriptive study in which the functions performed by the largest emergency service of Punjab (Pakistan) during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Punjab Emergency Service is arranging the number of infected victims as per districts. A detailed description of IT equipment, screening equipment, and logistic equipment for infection control measures along with other logistics required for the activity was devised. The equipment and logistics were distributed to all districts of the Punjab; whereas, locally hospitals have also compliance accordingly. Human resource requirements according to the districts have also been maintained to shift and hospitalize the corona patients as well as rituals.

Output/ Results

The Punjab Emergency Service managed the transportation, treatment and management of the COVID-19 patients exceptionally and perform following functions.

Establishment of 1190

For the sake of effective management and prevention of corona emergencies, coordination, counseling, and to recommend measures for mitigation of corona hazards endangering public safety during this pandemic, a toll free number 1190 was established nationwide by the Punjab Emergency Service. Initially, mostly calls were related to info seeking regarding the infection due to COVID-19, but this toll shifted towards economic emergency gradually.

Preparing for the Unpredictable

After the pandemic of Corona virus in the nation, a specific Corona Training Course has been composed for the cadets of KPK and Baluchistan at Emergency Services Academy to send the rescuers in the field for screening, dealing with and moving the tainted people after particular preparing. During this period of preparing, the cadets learned new Corona Rescue Drill Protocols, which incorporate social separating, utilization of facemasks, gloves, goggles and other important PPE during the treatment of Corona crises.



Corona Triage Center and Field Hospital

A best in class Corona Triage Center and Hospital has been set up at Expo Center Lahore. The authorities from the WHO visited the site alongside the Director General, PES, who educates them about the cycle regarding emergency, moving and detachment of the suspected and affirmed patients wearing and doffing of PPEs. Subsequent to having a total visit of the site, the dignitaries from WHO, shows their please as well as they valued the plans of the Punjab Emergency Service at Expo Center, Lahore.



Corona Quarantine Centers

Punjab Emergency Service established the second Corona Patients Hospital at Kala Shah kaku during this pandemic.



Prime Minister Pakistan visited Expo Corona Hospital

Prime Minister of Pakistan showed keen interest to provide relief and fight with this pandemic, he continuously supervised and visited Expo Corona Hospital at Lahore where he appreciated the services rendered by the all stakeholders. Pakistan policy of smart lockdown was globally appreciated and considered an effective toll to responding such pandemic.



Rescuers & Volunteers Participated in Relief Activities

During the pandemic of COVID-19 the economy of Pakistan fallen as comparative as the remainder of the world. Joblessness and joblessness make unsettling influence in the day by day profit of the individuals, the Government of Pakistan took a few activities to help poor people's and meriting families by outstanding their restricted assets. Some open and private NGOs likewise disperse the day by day kitchen merchandise/Rashan between the different meriting families. So also, Pakistan Development Network (PDN) conveys the Rashan from Governor House to Union Councils during Covid-19 Emergency by the assistance of Rescuers and Rescue Scouts in the different pieces of the locale Punjab.



Disinfection spray activities

Cleansing Spray Activities have been acted in all the 36 regions of the Punjab by the neighborhood region the board of Punjab Emergency Service to sterilize the streets, parks, mosques, roads, playing zones, shopping centers, public venues and different spots to keep the spots well living and more secure for the nearby networks. During these sanitization splashes all the security measures have been received to deal with the danger with full dedication.

Public Awareness Activities Regarding COVID-19

The Punjab Emergency Service performed the operational administrations during the pandemic of COVID-19 in all the 36 areas of the Punjab. The rescuers are playing out their clinical obligations with commitment as well as performing public mindfulness exercises to instruct individuals in regards to the seriousness of Corona Virus.



Rescue 1122 Paramedical Operational Activities during COVID-19

The Punjab Emergency Service, Rescue 1122 has performed lifesaving administrations at the period of scarcity. Notwithstanding, the serious daily routine danger to the individual experiences of the rescuers and their families, they perform commendable demonstrable skill during this pandemic by ideal moving the Corona patients to the isolate focuses to spare their valuable lives.



Psycho Social Support/Counseling of Frontline Rescuers

The psycho social help/guiding meetings were composed for Frontline Rescuers neutralizing Covid-19 at Expo Triage/Isolation Center, Mayo and PKLI Hospitals Lahore, though web based directing meetings have likewise been sorted out for rescuers managing Corona patients and performing Suspected Corona Burials across Punjab.



Suspected Corona Patient Burial

A particular preparing had been organized by the region the board to play out the sheltered Burial function of the patients that were kicked the bucket because of Corona Virus that may spare the lives others from this life danger, 1836 ceremonies were performed by the administration.



Limitations

In this epidemic situation of COVID-19, the following limitations have been observed.

- As it was the first experience for the world, shortage of proper training & equipment in the handling of Corona patients were compromised at most parts of the country.
- The attitude of the local people did also not understand.
- Government should take more steps to control this.
- Proper equipment and specific staff may be hired for the future upcoming of the same disease.

Lessons learned

- Pandemic control relies on community engagement and trust
- Diagnostic Testing Needs to Be Rapidly Expanded should not limited to the presence of both travel history to China plus clinical symptoms.
- The COVID-19 Emergency Response Team handles patient flow to local hospitals and addresses specific issues about bed resources, emergency department overcrowding, diagnostics and the need for patient transfer to other specialized facilities.
- plan interventions to avoid unnecessary morbidities or deaths, caused by a delayed visit to the emergency department due to Covid-19
- Front-line healthcare professionals and accessory front-line professionals must be equipped with state-of-the-art protection
- Contingency planning is long term, lacks immediacy and 'wow factor' and so may not always enjoy high political priority, and thus is often neglected Contingency planning also includes

development and implementation of outbreak prevention strategies (Menachery et al., 2015; Ng, Turinici, Ching, Chung, & Danchin, 2007).

- We are trained to handle incidents, not wars
- Know the needs of your department and community; don't wait for others to act
- When information being delivered is critical, it's important not to overwhelm
- Preparing for the Unpredictable
- Ensuring continuity of public services
- The general public was under insurmountable psychological pressure which may lead to various psychological problems, such as anxiety, fear, depression, and insomnia. Psychological crisis intervention plays a pivotal role in the overall deployment of the disease control
- Quick thinking, creativity and innovation
- Reliable information and awareness as a critical service
- Building and enhancing state legitimacy, government credibility and people's trust

Recommendations

- Need for separate Corona Field Centre in each District to reduce fear
- Smart Lockdown based on mortality data
- Research on low mortality in Pakistan
- Need for Effective Emergency Management and Disease Control System
- Institutionalization of Good Practices for healthy & safe living and Prevention of Emergencies

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