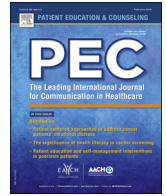




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Letter to the Editor

Can we increase public awareness without creating anxiety about Corona viruses?



Overview about corona viruses

Corona Viruses appeared recently in Saudi Arabia, and is considered a new one with limited information about its characteristic and ways of transmission [1]. World Health organization reported in their site on June 14, 2013 that Globally, from September 2012 to date June 14, 2013, WHO has been informed of a total of 58 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including 33 deaths. WHO has received reports of laboratory-confirmed cases originating in the following countries in the Middle East to date: Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). France, Germany, Italy, Tunisia and the United Kingdom also reported laboratory-confirmed cases; they were either transferred there for care of the disease or returned from the Middle East and subsequently became ill. In France, Italy, Tunisia and the United Kingdom, there has been limited local transmission among patients who had not been to the Middle East but had been in close contact with the laboratory-confirmed or probable cases [2]. In Saudi Arabia, ministry of health reported in their site on October 2013 that number of confirmed cases of novel corona viruses was 114 cases, and 49 cases passed away [3].

Discussion

The Centers for disease Control and prevention (CDC) in USA reported in their site that Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV), formerly called “novel coronavirus (nCoV),” was identified in 2012 in Saudi Arabia. And most people who got infected with MERS-CoV developed severe acute respiratory illness with symptoms of fever, cough, and shortness of breath, and about half of them died [2,4]. Also Center for disease control and prevention in USA reported that this virus is different from any other coronavirus previously found in people. It is also different from the coronavirus that caused SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) in 2003. However, like the SARS virus, MERS-CoV is most similar to coronaviruses found in bats [4].

Hajj and Omra in Saudi Arabia

Muslims comes from all countries in the world to performed Hajj and Omra in specific time and places in Makka area in Saudi Arabia, so for that reasons, Saudi ministry of health have a special experiences in dealing with this annual Islamic hajj meeting. All health sectors in Saudi Arabia should coordinate together to facilitate and improve health status among pilgrimage especially preventive measures of respiratory tract infections which are very common during Hajj periods [5–11].

Methods to alleviate potential anxiety surrounding the disease

Increase Public awareness about preventive measures for Corona viruses in Saudi Arabia are important aspects during this time of reported confirmed cases of corona viruses in Saudi Arabia [1]. This public awareness should be given in a scientific health education messages without creating anxiety and fear in the community which might increase the worries and the demand on health services without real indication. One of the practical methods to alleviate anxiety surrounding the disease is by educating families and society in a simple and clear reassuring message from health education department in Ministry of health without increasing the phobia about the disease in the community. Also it is important for Ministry of health in Saudi Arabia to coordinate with other health sectors all over the World like World Health Organization WHO [2], and center for disease control and prevention CDC [4]. And till now ministry of health in Saudi Arabia in coordination with all health sectors nationally and internationally try to control corona viruses in Saudi community without creating anxiety in the public.

Conclusion

Health care providers especially physicians who work at emergency and primary care clinics should practice health education and be aware about the updated knowledge for the progress of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) in Saudi Arabia and other countries, and to coordinate with all health sectors in educating, planning preventive measures and management aspects according to the scientific standards and advise from ministry of health in Saudi Arabia, World health organization, and centers for disease control and prevention.

Practice implication

Increase public awareness about preventive measures for Corona viruses in Saudi Arabia are important aspects during this time of reported confirmed cases of corona viruses in Saudi Arabia. This public awareness should be given in a scientific health education messages without creating anxiety and fear in the community which might increase the worries and the demand on health services without real indication.

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