



Peaceful Coexistence Between Human and Novel Coronavirus-2019; Where Do Researchers Stand

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Abstract

COVID-19, as an emerging viral disease, has rapidly become a new pandemic in human life. According to the similarities between novel coronavirus-2019 and Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) virus, the initial assumptions were about the temporary spread of the disease and its rapid control. Nevertheless, increasing human knowledge of the characteristics of the new coronavirus, as well as how the disease has spread, has questioned these assumptions. Currently, it seems that the virus has entered the human life cycle, and individuals should adhere to new lifestyles to return to their normal life. We should select those lifestyles to reduce the risk of contact with the virus and getting COVID-19 as well as to lead a normal life. It is believed that basic medical scientists could play an important role in identifying the most appropriate lifestyles by considering the characteristics of the virus and the desires of different social groups. They could also provide the best answers to the countless questions concerning how to live peacefully, considering the novel COVID-2019.

Keywords: COVID-19, Socialization, Resilience, Lifestyle

1. Introduction

A few months ago, when a cluster of pneumonia cases was reported from China, nobody thought that humans were facing a new pandemic (1). Given the similarities between the novel coronavirus-2019 and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) virus (2), the initial assumptions were that the spread of the disease would be controlled after a while and people would return to their normal life (3). But that does not seem to be happening soon. Since the identification of the disease, a lot of efforts have been made to control it (4-6). Most of them have been focused on identifying the virus and its characteristics, natural history of the disease, modes of transmission, finding effective prevention such as finding an effective vaccine, and therapeutic methods. Moreover, home quarantine and lockdown of the community were selected as the main strategies to prevent the disease from spreading to different countries. However, all of these efforts could not be effective if the disease stays in the community for a long time. It seems we need to have a multidimensional strategy to deal with the disease, and this requires better involvement of basic

medical scientists. Therefore, this article has written with the aim of asking some important questions around this issue i.e. how long could ongoing strategies continue? What rules and recommendations are appropriate as long-term strategies? We also want to emphasize the role of these researchers who may be less directly involved with COVID-19 in introducing useful lifestyles for the community.

2. Arguments

Scientific communities need to immediately focus on answering these questions and other questions related to human lifestyles in the prolonged presence of the virus. Researchers in all fields of sciences should conduct extensive, purposeful, and synergistic studies to identify appropriate human lifestyles, which are more suitable in the presence of the virus. Here are some important, non-pharmaceutical suggested interventions as well as the most common social activities and the related questions for how to do them properly; questions that the basic scientists could answer well.

Social distancing: Defined as “keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home” (7). It means that people need to keep a distance from each other. However, shaking hands and hugging as a greeting is quite common in many countries. We do not know how this culture could be changed. Are there any alternatives to show kindness and continuity of social connectedness? Do we need new international and national rules and customs? Moreover, do we need to induce social distancing in the educational system? If yes, how should educational activities be carried out in schools and universities? Does the continuity of distance learning harm the quality of education? Is holding regular classes by reducing the number of students and increasing the number of classes a good solution? Furthermore, could public places be kept locked down for a long time? How should people go to shops, museums, parks, stadiums, and holy and religious places? We should also respond to possible questions, such as “what are the barriers to social distancing? What are the problems with maintaining home isolation and preventing social contacts?”

Public Transport: Public transport could be one of the main concerns because of its ability to spread the virus due to the possibility of close contact (8). For years, the use of public facilities has been encouraged by governments for many reasons, such as environmental health, economic efficiency, and speed of work. But what do the governments need to do now? Should the governments change their previous policy? If yes, do they need to expand the public transportation network system or manage people’s time in public transport? Which one is more feasible? If not, how should people use trains and cabs without fear of being infected with the virus? Should the use of public transport be restricted, and, in return, the use of private vehicles promoted?

Shopping: People need to shop on a daily basis. They could use online shopping, but is it possible for everyone and everywhere? Is it possible to expand online shopping for all countries as well as for all rural and urban areas within countries? Do we need to improve internet businesses? And how? Are all people willing to use this method? If not, what are the recommendations for shopping at stores considering the disease? Is there a need to set or revise purchase rules? Should there be penalties for those who do not adhere? And how?

Office Work: Providing their services, all employees and workers need to be present at the workplace, which, in turn, increases physical, interpersonal contacts. But, how should the employees be present at the workplace to prevent the spread of the virus? What should an employee do at work to prevent virus transmission to him/herself, other colleagues, and his/her clients? Is it enough to use a

mask and gloves to protect yourself at work? How should customers be provided with services related to each profession? What services could be provided to customers through teleworking and how? Are these accepted by employers as well as by the customers? What is the teleworking service fee?

Social Support: Affording life is the first concern for people who lost their job due to quarantine but is it enough? (9) Is it the whole support that the jobless people need to have? How long could the government support the employers to keep their employees? What changes in the business infrastructure and workforce law are needed to keep the economy train on its rail in the long run? What is the role of insurance companies in such situations? Is it possible to change the insurance rules during the epidemic period in such a way that it is more in favor of the highly vulnerable groups? How does social security work? Is there a need to change the insurance policies? Who is responsible to change the rules, and how should it be done? Can only financial support be enough to keep people at home and execute social distancing, or do people need psychological and emotional support in addition to financial support?

3. Conclusions

In General, community members need an extensive change in their daily lifestyles to cope with the virus. Besides, governments should customize their policies and actions to provide better and more appropriate living conditions. The changes should be scientific as well as applicable in the long run, at both personal and organizational levels. To meet this, there is a strong need to change beliefs and actions.

At the individual level, we need to make a wide change in people’s knowledge, attitude, and practice. Everybody should take social responsibility, avoid risky personal actions, follow the relevant rules and regulations, and change one’s lifestyle to be compatible with “the post-COVID-19 era”.

At the governance level, it requires to change and adapt policies, formulate appropriate programs, and provide the necessary infrastructure for people to live with the changing lifestyles.

At the scientific level, researchers, especially non-clinical or basic medical scientists, should respond to concerns at the individual and governmental levels. They should also be responsible for answering the questions raised in this article and countless other questions concerning peaceful living with COVID-19. To manage a crisis, managers should, meanwhile, make quick decisions. If the

scientists monitor, explain, and analyze the critical situations, and, based on the results, answer the crisis-related questions, as well as recommend potential prediction scenarios for the future, interventions could be made on the evidence. For a broader view of the crisis, it seems that we currently need multidisciplinary research. Experts' collaboration in a variety of fields such as epidemiology, public health, community medicine, environmental health, occupational health, management, nutrition, and health economics helps reach an appropriate solution and optimal decision making. Recognizing barriers and motivators as well as enablers, researchers could scientifically recommend relevant methods that would be followed more closely by people. Besides, the more powerful the scientific communities play their role, the less likely to be exploited by fraudsters and gossipers. It seems that the main role of the non-clinical scientists is to design and develop non-pharmaceutical interventions related to COVID-19, which are compatible with the characteristics of different societies. To do this, there is a need to build the necessary infrastructure for participation and collaboration of the researchers. There should, of course, be a willingness to do group studies among researchers. Also, the role of the researchers in controlling COVID-19 should be recognized by decision-makers.

Footnotes

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