

**Preparedness and response: Global insights on COVID-19**

April 13, 2020

Speakers



**Dr. Hanan Hassan Balkhi**  
WHO Assistant Director  
General for Antibiotic Affairs.



**Dr. Adnan Nawar Khestawi**  
WHO epidemiologist  
and virologist in Iraq.



**Dr. Bhanu Neupane**  
UNESCO Communications and  
Information Sector Program  
Specialist.



**Dr. Nazih Al-Othmani**  
Associate Professor of  
Medical Electrical Engineering  
at King Abdulaziz University

Moderator

**The most prominent recommendations**

Envisioning possible scenarios on how to deal with each stage of Coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19), provided that they include the appropriate mechanisms that fit the characteristics of each stage based on the spread rates and severity of the virus.

Strengthening international cooperation with governments and health organizations in fighting COVID-19.

Ensuring having sufficient and credible information on the extent of the virus spread rate in every country worldwide, the most affected areas, the available treatment options and the healthcare provided.

Intensifying scientific research efforts to search for effective medications with proven results for COVID-19 which they have to tested in the laboratory in the shortest possible time.

 The webinar is on the International Aspar Forum YouTube channel

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Themes:

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- **Third:** Potential global health scenarios for (COVID-19).
- **Fourth:** The extent of effective medications for (COVID-19).
- **Fifth:** The role of international organizations and (WHO) in fighting (COVID-19).
- Sources and references.

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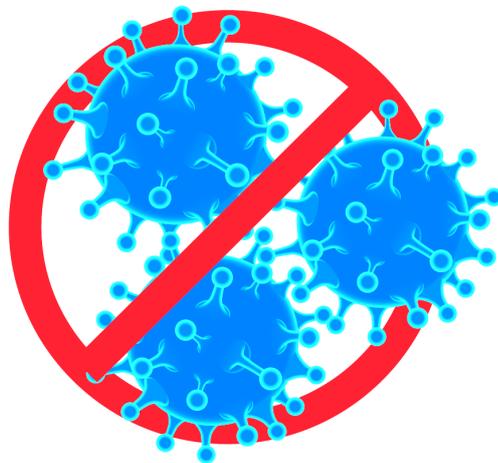


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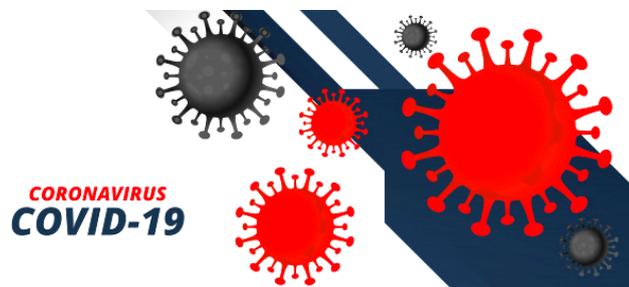
### First: Recommendations.

- Envisioning possible scenarios on how to deal with each stage of Coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19), provided that they include the appropriate mechanisms that fit the characteristics of each stage based on the spread rates and severity of the virus.
- A gradual action in taking any precautionary measures to deal with or mitigate the Coronavirus pandemic, starting with in the areas with the lowest spread rates of the virus, and take a two-week period (i.e., the incubation period) as a buffer to identify the effectiveness of measures.
- Ensuring having sufficient and credible information on the extent of the virus spread rate in every country worldwide, the most affected areas, the available treatment options and the healthcare provided.
- Increasing the space for various educational materials to stop societal stigmatization and discrimination against the people who may have been infected with or recovered from COVID-19. This would encourage community members to adopt supportive behaviors related to the disease.
- Strengthening international cooperation with governments and health organizations in fighting COVID-19.
- Intensifying scientific research efforts to search for effective medications with proven results for COVID-19 which they have to tested in the laboratory in the shortest possible time.



## Second: Introducing Coronavirus (Covid-19)

- COVID-19 refers to one of the common types of viruses in the world, which may affect most people during their lifetime. They may infect both human beings and animals, and there are several types of these viruses, that can cause infection and make people ill. Most often the result in severe diseases to the upper respiratory system. Because of this infection, sometimes severe diseases such as the Sever Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) may be caused. Coronaviruses have been first discovered in the 1860s, with their origin is still unknown, but they have gained its name relative to their crown-like shape.
- Although Coronaviruses cause the common symptoms of common cold in general, which can be treated by rest, and taking over-the-counter medications, there are some severe types of these viruses. For instance, 475 people, who were diagnosed with MERS, lost their lives in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Europe. In a related context, a new type of Coronavirus has appeared recently and it has been known as the Wuhan virus or nCoV-2019 or (COVID-19) for short.



- Scientists believe that the new virus can spread from one person to another by close contact through the respiratory system. In March 2020, the World Health Organization declared it has classified the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID- 19) as a pandemic.
- It is noticed that the epidemics that appeared in the past two decades are not new. For example, there are the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-COV), the Avian influenza and many others. It is estimated that around 7% of these epidemics are of animal sources, as wild animals possess a large number of germs and microbes, that can be transmitted when contact takes place between wild animals and pets. These microbes and germs will multiply, and they will later be transmitted to human beings. In rare cases, germs may be transmitted from wild animals to human beings directly. What is certain is that in the last century, there was no such a pandemic like COVID-19 in terms of rapid spread and infection.

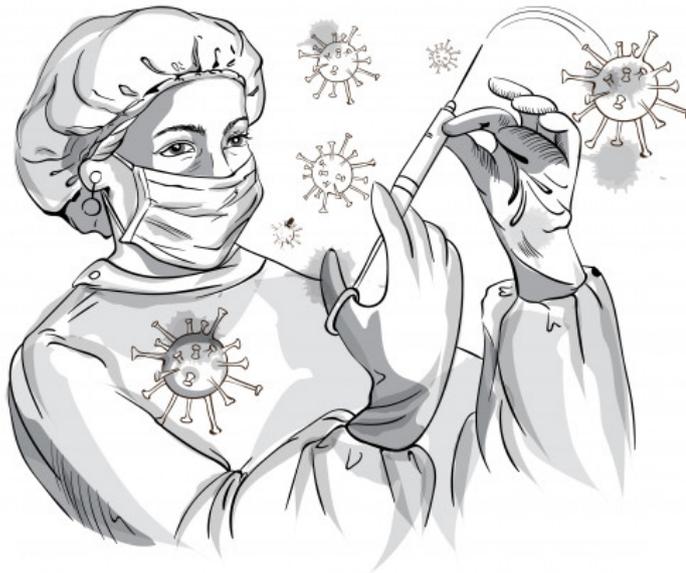
**Third: Potential global health scenarios for (COVID-19):**

- The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that COVID-19 represents a new strain not previously identified. According to the organization, in about 3% of reported cases, the virus is fatal. The risk of death increases for older people, and the situation gets worse with having previous ailments. Thus, relatively few cases have been recorded among children, and more research is required to understand why.
- Several scenarios are expected regarding the future of COVID-19. The most important of which can be explained as follows:
  1. **Scenario (I) (ideal):** That public health agencies and institutions in different countries have their grip over COVID-19, and be able to come up with decisive ways and procedures to deal with and control the disease.
  2. **Scenario (II):** The world is swept over by COVID-19, and becomes uncontrollable, particularly in the less developed countries. The situation gets worse to insurmountable levels, but starts improving thereafter, similar to what happened with the Ebola outbreak during 2014-2016. The epidemic spread at the time in West Africa and caused more than 11 thousand deaths and infected about 28 thousand people, but stopped spreading at a certain stage.
  3. **Scenario (III):** COVID-19 spreads and becomes a reality that we have to coexist with. This scenario is similar to what happened when the swine flu virus (H1N1) spread. It spread among almost 21% of the world's population, and the World Health Organization declared a pandemic state. However, the virus has now become seasonal. It appears every year and disappears on its own all over the world. Although the mortality rate of COVID-19 is lower than SARS, it is more fatal because of its spread rate. It cannot be concluded whether COVID-19 is seasonal or not, unless a long period of time has passed. Years are needed during which the behavior of this virus can be observed. The behavior of SARS differs from the behavior of MERS, and the behavior of COVID-19 is different from the two viruses.



#### **Fourth:** The extent of effective medications for (COVID-19).

- Current indications show that there are no fully confirmed medications approved by the World Health Organization so far for COVID-19. However, there are medications under investigation, through observational and clinical experiments for patients with MERS. It is important to note that misinformation about COVID-19 has become common, and there is no aspect that has not been affected by deception related to this crisis. For example, there has misguided information on the origin of COVID-19, unproven prevention and treatment methods. Perhaps the riskiest misinformation are the calls for the use of approved drugs that are used for other purposes. Such drugs that have not been laboratory proven to conquer Covid-19.



- The World Health Organization urges the countries to prepare for the worst, and raise their risk assessment to the highest level. It also confirms that this is a true test for all countries, and that the failure of the relevant health authorities to discover cases of infection and their lack of preparedness is not an excuse not to search for a cure for the disease.

**Fifth:** The role of international organizations and (WHO) in fighting (COVID-19).

- International organizations in general, WHO in particular, and the governments worldwide are playing a major role in preventing the transmission of Coronavirus through monitoring and reducing its spread rate to the minimum. Realizing the importance of full international cooperation, as well as the concerted effort performed by the individuals and governments at the local level, is another step on the road of fighting the virus. Evidence on the ground confirms that achieving victory in countering this pandemic depends on coordination and cooperation among the countries. For instance, sharing information and research results, along with the citizens' commitment with the precautionary measures, creates greater opportunities for success to eliminate the virus.
- Public health groups and organizations worldwide, such as the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and (WHO), work together, monitor the pandemic and post updates on their websites. These institutions make recommendations on disease prevention and treatment.



- WHO, for example, developed a strategy for dealing with COVID-19. This strategy is updated periodically based on the lessons learned from the pandemic. The goal is for the countries to control the spread rates of the virus and reduce transmission. By and large, this is to lead to complete prevention if possible, thus reducing COVID-19-related deaths. The strategy also focuses on middle-income countries with weak health systems and infrastructure, especially in countries stricken by conflicts.

- According to the reports published by WHO which has a major role to play during in the Coronavirus pandemic, undergoing actions and measures worldwide must be more closely linked to the evolving nature of the virus. This means that these actions and procedures have to take place according to the following framework:

- **First: Controlling the spread rate of (COVID-19):** When there is spread, contacts must be identified and tracked, while controlling the spread through detection, testing, isolation, care provision and quarantine.



- **Second:** Efficiency of the health system, including service providers and others, in coping with the significant increase in the positive cases of COVID-19 that need treatment, mainly the critical ones. All cases, regardless of severity, need to be isolated, ensuring the presence of trained health care providers. Quarantine rules shall also be applied through isolating the patients in designated places, health institutions, or at home, while providing health care for each case, and tracking contacts through daily follow-ups.
- **Third:** More effective reduction to the risks of the virus outbreaks. This requires identifying causes of the breakouts, the necessary precautions such as social distancing and reducing the risk of new outbreaks of (COVID-19) by following the infection control procedures at hospitals, testing all medical teams and patients, and following up on critical cases, while preventing the spread of the virus in enclosed spaces where it is difficult to apply social distancing, such as markets, restaurants, public services, and others. In this context, we must work to increase social distancing in crowded places such as schools, universities, large crowding areas, and sports events to reduce the chances of virus transmission.



World Health  
Organization

- **Fourth:** Raising awareness of following preventive measures at the workplaces, educational institutions, worship places and markets. This includes physical distancing and washing hands constantly, and following the etiquette of sneezing and coughing, while encouraging works that can be performed from home that can be done to reduce crowding.
- **Fifth:** Risk management for cases coming from communities characterized with higher spread rates of (COVID-19). It is possible to identify the cases that caused many infections and spread the virus, knowing the source of infections and the measures taken. The passengers returning from abroad need to be isolated and quarantined.
- **Sixth:** Community participation in taking precautionary measures to detect and treat cases with (COVID-19) .People must be informed all the time about the reasons for tightening or easing the precautionary measures, engaging the community when taking action. People must be provided with accurate information through reliable channels to avoid rumors, while alternatives are provided so as to ensure that the society adapts to the measures.



- The WHO is managing the pandemic effectively, be it at the global level or at the level of each country. It responds to the breakout of the Coronavirus disease with governments, manufacturers, and the network of epidemiological supply chains to enhance and increase production and secure allocations of these products to highly affected and endangered countries. The organization shipped nearly two million protective items to 75 countries, in addition to shipping diagnosis items to 126 countries. It also plays a pivotal role in scientific research, and in this context, it held the first meeting to define the road map for scientific studies, and identified 9 main axes for studying the virus and the disease it causes. It issued recommendations regarding collective planning measures in the context of the current Coronavirus outbreak.

- Moreover, the World Health Organization and the European Investment Bank (EIB) strengthened their cooperation for the promotion of public health, the provision of basic equipment, training and investment in hygiene in countries most vulnerable to (COVID-19).
- This helps to support resilience to reduce the health and social impacts of future health emergencies. With the breakout of Coronavirus, the European Investment Bank is currently evaluating more than 20 projects in vaccine development and means of diagnosis and treatment; This leads to potential investments estimated at 700 million euros. The bank will also participate in the European Union's ongoing initiative to announce donations for the global response to the Coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19).
- However, with the influential role played by the World Health Organization in countering (Covid-19), especially with regard to developing guidelines, sharing information, and providing the countries with basic supplies, personal protection tools, laboratory testing tools, and other logistical supplies; the governments themselves need to be more transparent and provide more data, in line with the laws and policies related to the right to access information and ensure credibility during the crisis.



- It should be noted that the UNESCO, in turn, is working to combat misguided and unscientific information related to (COVID-19). It also encourages people and institutions to critique information, and support the availability of appropriate solutions - technical or non-technical - to ensure the accuracy of false information about the virus.

- Efforts to tackle the breakout of (COVID-19), as well as taking the necessary health, economic and other measures, have to include the important role played by the governments and people, media, influential people in society. They are vital in preventing stigmatization which the people diagnosed with COVID-19 suffer from. It is important to intensify the various educational materials for this purpose in order to encourage community members to adopt supportive behaviors related to COVID-19. Given that social stigma may arise due to lacking sufficient information on how the Coronavirus is transmitted and treated, as well as how to prevent infection, the priority should be given to providing accurate information on the situation in each country and the most affected regions, the treatment options available and the healthcare provided.



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