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Coronavirus: Its Unani concept and prevention

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Abstract

Coronaviruses are a group of enveloped viruses with non segmented, single-stranded, and positive sense RNA genomes. Coronaviruses belong to the “Coronaviridae family” which causes various diseases, from the common cold to SARS and MERS. In march 2020 the world health organization declared the SARS-COV-2 virus a global pandemic. We performed a review to describe existing literature about Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Keywords: Coronavirus, Unani, RNA

Introductions

The human body is exposed to variety of infectious micro-organisms, such as viruses, bacteria, fungi, protozoa and helminths, which cause tissue damage through different mechanisms. Viruses are unique among these five types of infectious organisms in that they can manipulate the host cell machinery in a unique way and continuously evolve to survive and prosper in all species ^[1].

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new coronavirus called SARS-COV-2. WHO (world health organization) first learned of this new virus on 31 December 2019, following a report of a cluster of cases of viral pneumonia in Wuhan peoples republic of China ^[2].

Since December 2019, a novel coronavirus disease had rapidly spread throughout China, leading to a global outbreak, and causing considerable public health concern. WHO announced the outbreak of COVID-19 as a global public health emergency on 30 January 2020. In India, the first case of COVID-19 was reported on 27 January 2020 in Kerala district. Since then there is a wide variation in the reporting of cases across the country. The case reporting is based on the SARS-COV-2 antigen testing by real time Reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction {RT-qpcr} or by Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) ^[3].

Coronavirus (COV) is clustered under the viral family group that causes diseases in mammals birds. A pandemic novel coronavirus was named as “coronavirus disease 2019” (2019-nCov) by WHO in Geneva, Switzerland. As its RNA pattern is closer to SARS, the 2019 coronavirus is renamed as SARS COV-2. It belongs to the subfamily orthocoronavirinae inside the family coronaviridae, order Nidovirales, and the realm Riboviria ^[4]. A two-dimensional view of corona beneath a transmission electron microscopy reveals a characteristic look of “paying homage to a crown” around the virions. The lead to naming the virus corona meaning crown or halo in latin.

This is the deadly third generation virus in corona family preceded by severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in 2003, killed almost 10% of total affected patients (8429) across 29 international locations and middle east respiratory syndrome in 2012, even more lethal with a mortality rate of 30% of the infected patients ^[4].

Symptoms

A wide range of symptoms are found in COVID-19 patients, ranging from mild to moderate to severe, rapidly progressive, and fulminant disease. Symptoms of COVID-19 are non specific and disease presentation can range from asymptomatic cases ranges from 1.6% to 51.7% and these people do not present apparent abnormalities in lung computed tomography. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, cough, myalgia or fatigue and atypical symptoms include sputum headache, haemoptysis, vomiting and diarrhoea. Some patients may present with sore throat, rhinorrhoea, headache and confusion a few days before the onset of fever, indicating that fever is a critical symptom, but not the initial manifestation of

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infection. Furthermore some patients experience loss of smell (Hyposmia) or taste (hypogeusia) which are now being considered early warning signs and indications for self isolation [5].

Control & prevention strategies

COVID-19 is clearly a serious disease of international concern. By some estimates it has a higher reproductive number than SARS [6] and more people have been reported to be infected or died from it than SARS [7]. Similar to SARS-Cov and MERS-Cov, disrupting the chain of transmission is considered key to stopping the spread of disease [8]. Different strategies should be implemented in health care settings and at the global and local levels. In a community setting, isolating infected people are the primary measure to interrupt the transmission. For example, immediate actions taken by Chinese health authorities included isolating the infected people and quarantining of suspected people and their close contacts [9]. Moreover, educating the public to recognise the unusual symptoms such as chronic cough or shortness of breath is essential therefore that they could seek medical care for early detection of the virus. If large scale community transmission occurs, mitigating social gatherings, temporary school closure, home isolation close monitoring of symptomatic individual provision of life supports (e.g oxygen supply, mechanical ventilator) personal hand hygiene and wearing personal protective equipment such as face masks should also be enforced [10].

Laboratory findings

Decrease in lymphocytes is the most common laboratory finding in 2019nCoV and is found in as many as 83% of hospitalized patients. Lymphopenia, neutrophilia, elevated Liver enzymes (serum alanine aminotransferase and aspartate aminotransferase levels), elevated lactate dehydrogenase, increase in CRP, and high ferritin levels. Elevated D-dimer and lymphopenia have been closely associated with mortality. Among those patients admitted in ICU with increasing critical illness had elevated Procalcitonin and high plasma levels of inflammatory makers, suggestive of potential immune dysregulation. In all the patients with mild symptoms of suspected infection, or positive history of exposure to the infected person mandatorily has to perform PCR real-time fluorescence (RT-PCR) to detect the positive nucleic acid of SARS-CoV-2 in sputum, throat swabs, and secretions of the lower respiratory tract sample [11-17].

Unani concept of prevention of epidemics & pandemics

In Unani medicine, several recommendations have Described for the preservation and resort restoration of health under the umbrella of Asbab-e-sitah Zarooriyah (six essential principles). Various general preventive measures have also been recommended to prevent epidemic disease and pandemics.

The primary method to prevent the incidents of disease during pandemics is to move from the focus of the disease to healthy regions. At this time of coronavirus pandemic too, the first step that the World Health Organization took towards declining the coronavirus positive infection curve was to emphasise employing the method of quarantine. Ibn Sina was the first who gave the concept of quarantine in Al Qanoon Fit tib, He discussed that 40 day period of

quarantine was essential to take the spread of contagious diseases.

Lisan al- din Ibn Al Khatib (1313-1374 CE), In his treatise on a plague he stated that the existence of contagion is established by experience investigation the evidence of the census and trustworthy reports. He considered that contaminated air is one of the main causes for the spread of the infection (plague). Zakariya Razi had an understanding of the prevention of epidemics by advocating the methods of quarantine he advised to stop public transportation and avoid overcrowding during the time of epidemics [17].

Conclusion

COVID-19, which emerged as pandemic in 2020 has the symptoms almost similar to that of SARS and MERS but affecting the respiratory system predominantly. There are many descriptions in Unani medicine about infective diseases epidemic and pandemic given by Hippocrates, Ibn Sina, Zakariya Razi, Ismail jurjani and many others. Since the symptoms of COVID-19 are very much similar to that of Nazla-e-wabaiya (Nazla Haar). Therefore, COVID-19 can be effectively prevented by the use of drugs.

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