Editorial

The Covid-19 Pandemic

Author: Siddiq I Khalil^*

*Editor-in-Chief, Sudan Heart Journal
^Corresponding Author, editor@sudanheartjournal.com

We devote this issue to the Covid-19 Pandemic, to shed more light on some of the features of the disease that are still contentious or not fully resolved. Dr. Ahmed Suliman, Head of Cardiology Department at Shaab Teaching Hospital came forward with the idea and has kindly accepted to be the Guest Editor of the issue. Sudan Heart Journal is grateful to our international and national contributors who responded to our invitation in such a short time and sent comprehensive articles of great interest.

The first confirmed case of the novel coronavirus disease (Covid-19) was declared in Sudan on March 13th, 2020. Most of the early cases were introduced by Sudanese Nationals coming from the Gulf Region. Within two months, the total number of cases had rapidly reached 1,818, including 198 deaths. This rapid increase has been attributed mainly to the lack of compliance from the public to health warnings and instructions. Additionally, false information, spread by political adversaries, expressed that the Covid-19 pandemic was deliberately created by the government to cover its failure especially concerning financial difficulties.

When the lockdown restrictions were set by the government, social distancing, personal hygiene, and the use of masks were not universally followed and crowding during social occasions e.g. wedding and funerals continued even at a greater pace. The devastating effects can be seen from the total number of people who tested positive reaching 6,730 cases including 413 deaths (June 2020) while worldwide the count of positive cases reached 7,739,944 confirmed cases and 428,337 deaths. The world is truly facing a pandemic of epic proportions, the like of which it has never seen. A time of great fear and danger of such magnitude

requires solidarity and hope, not negligence and misinformation.

Even as the countries around the world continue to battle Covid-19; scientists, medical experts, and researchers across the globe are working in unprecedented ways to develop a treatment for the virus. An important positive development, AZD1222, the recombinant adenovirus vaccine that originated in Oxford is expected to be available in September 2020(1). The US-based drug giant – Moderna – has planned to start a Phase III , randomized control trial for its RNA-based vaccine to 30,000 volunteers on June 13, 2020(2). Moreover, Eli Lilly, another US-based drug giant, is developing an antibody treatment for Covid-19 patients that can be available as early as September 2020. The company is currently testing three antibody therapies, one of which is scheduled to enter clinical trials in the second week of June 2020, while human trials have already been conducted on the other two therapies.

Dexamethasone was recently found to provide significant benefit in ventilated patients. A statement from the Chief Investigators of the Randomized Evaluation of COVid-19 thERapY (RECOVERY, www.recoverytrial.net) Trial, on dexamethasone, June 26, 2020, reported that dexamethasone reduced deaths by one-third in patients on a ventilator (rate ratio 0.65 [95% confidence interval 0.48 to 0.88]; p=0.0003) and by one fifth in other patients receiving oxygen only (0.80 [0.67 to 0.96]; p=0.0021). There was no benefit among those patients who did not require respiratory support (1.22 [0.86 to 1.75]; p=0.14). More information about the treatment of Covid-19 can be found in this issue written by Dr. Abdelhaleem Bella in his article entitled ”Covid-19, what have we learnt-to-date?”.

The social distancing imposed by the pandemic brought about new positive practices that have not been widely utilized before. Home schooling and working from home where people do not need to commute or travel to a central workplace or schools became extensively practiced. Video conferencing is the new norm for meetings. More applications are coming into use every month and it may be predicted that future work and schooling may be shifted to homes rather than the multistory buildings that now exist.

Another issue of note is the role of the medical and nursing staff, the affectionately named “White Army”, who heroically put themselves at risk through their long days of work on the frontlines during the pandemic and the scientists who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to create a vaccine. Their dedication, self-sacrifice, and resilience are appreciated throughout the whole world. They are winning for us a World War in which not a single shot is fired.

Currently, and in the absence of any definitive cure, social distancing measures, personal hygiene and the use of face masks remain the best bet to protect ourselves.

References:

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