

➔ Letter to Editor



Consulting Services of Iran Health Insurance Organization During the COVID-19 Era

Ali Akbar Hesam^{1*}, Soghra Fallahi¹, Alireza Arabi², Ali Ayoobian³, Mohsen Koolivand¹, Ali Shojaee⁴, Mohammadjavad Hesam⁵, Sajjad Shamloo⁶

¹Cardiovascular Research Center, Hormozgan University of Medical Sciences, Bandar Abbas, Iran

²Family Medicine Specialist, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical sciences, Tehran, Iran

³Department of Health Services Management, North Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

⁴Department of Management Sciences and Health Economics, School of Public Health, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

⁵International Institut of french studies, 2 Allee Rene Capitant, 67081, Strasbourg, France

⁶Student of Dentistry, Student Research Committee, Hormozgan University of Medical Sciences, Bandar Abbas, Iran

*Correspondence to Ali Akbar Hesam, Email: entesharat.pa@gmail.com

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Dear Editor,

The COVID-19 virus, which leads to severe and acute respiratory distress syndrome and may cause death in some patients, has currently become pandemic and is spreading around the world (1). The lack of any definitive treatment or prevention and the predictions of some epidemiologists about at least 60% of the population suffering from this disease have caused a lot of stress and anxiety in societies (2). Fear and anxiety caused by the possible infection of the disease due to its high rate of spread is destructive and can lead to mental health problems (3). Convincing evidence has shown that stressful, distressing, and emotionally disturbing conditions, in the long run, lead to a weakening of the immune system and a reduction in the body's resistance to disease. Long-term quarantine, hearing, or reading disturbing news about the disease pandemic in the media has all been a source of increased stress and stress (4,5). Today, health information includes not only information related to medical records, but also information that has preventive, diagnostic, therapeutic, and rehabilitation aspects, such as educational text messages, books, articles, etc. This information behooves people to be less likely to get the disease and to be treated more promptly if they have the disease, such as information on ways to transmit the disease, symptoms, diagnostic tests, and more. This information is provided and presented with the participation of health insurance professionals (6). The role of health insurance during the epidemic of diseases such as coronavirus, if done properly and with principled planning along with the infrastructure and

skilled manpower can play a significant role in health awareness of individuals and their education as health ambassadors.

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Getting access to and using valid information during an epidemic crisis, including coronavirus, can meet the information needs of individuals, especially in the field of health, and this can greatly reduce the anxiety and psychological pressures of coronavirus pandemic disease. During the coronavirus virus epidemic, the Health Insurance Organization of Iran and all provincial offices provided health information services to all citizens in a coordinated program through call on 1666, 24-hour telephone answering services. This system was informed through various means such as media, sending text messages to the mobile phones of all citizens, virtual space, and newspapers by the headquarters of the organization and the general departments of the provinces. During the 24-hour vigil, health insurance professionals, including physicians, health care providers, and health experts, answered all citizens' questions about COVID-19. Questions of all callers were recorded in a checklist by respondents. Information counseling by health professionals was conducted in a two-way conversation for all citizens, and the necessary recommendations were provided to all citizens according to the information received, and if they had any suspicious symptoms of covid-19 disease, they were referred to medical centers.

Conclusion

Given the World Health Organization's emphasis on public access to health information (7) and the governments' anticipation of these issues in national information policies, it is essential to provide a platform for this mission in Iran. Therefore, having valid information at the right time and place for everyone helps reduce treatment costs (8,9), disease prevention, especially during the epidemic (10), and improving community health. In this regard, the coordination and cooperation of health professionals and caregivers, and all health experts can play an effective role. During the coronavirus virus pandemic in Iran, providing health insurance training and counseling services has not only played an effective role in reducing the anxiety and psychological pressures of callers but has also played a significant role in identifying suspected cases and referring them to health care centers to follow up on the disease. It is suggested that the Health Insurance Organization, utilizing information technology during the outbreak of the epidemic of diseases, especially coronavirus, and using the available facilities and capacities, offer all its educational and counseling programs for all audiences in addition to call on 1666, 24-hour telephone answering services using virtual spaces to increase the level of health literacy of the audience and change their behavior and attitude in dealing with the epidemic conditions of diseases. Today, providing health insurance services with the appropriate use of new health information technology can play an effective role in increasing the quality of life of the audience by increasing awareness and training health knowledge.

Authors' Contribution

AA, AAY, AS and AAH designed the present study. AAH wrote drafted manuscript. SF, MJH, AA, AAY, AS, and MK revised manuscript.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Ethical Approval

Not applicable.

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