

COVID-19 Test in Bangladesh: Psychological Factors

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Abstract

Case Report

Coronavirus (COVID-19) disease is a highly contagious disease and has a serious psychological impact and mental health problems throughout the entire world. The aim of this study is to find out the Psychological factors which are responsible for the decreasing rate of COVID-19 tests in Bangladesh. A nationwide online survey was conducted during April 2020 to June 2020 by a magazine related to mental health named "Moner Khbor". Among 560 participants who gave their opinion about the reluctance of testing COVID-19, 65% were male and 35% female. 23.57% participants think that the rate of COVID-19 test is decreasing due to facing lots of troubles and harassments during test procedure. 22.32% participants believed that people lost their credibility per test and 16.07% believed that the risk of infection increases when they go to hospital for a test. Several psychological reasons were found from that survey which is responsible for the decreasing rate of COVID-19 tests in Bangladesh.

Keywords: COVID-19, Psychological Factors, RT-PCR test, Bangladesh.

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INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered RNA virus named coronavirus, formerly referred to as severe acute respiratory syndrome-coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2) [1]. The first case of COVID-19 disease was identified on December 8, 2019, in Wuhan, the Hubei province of China by the Chinese Center for Disease and Prevention from the throat swab of a patient [2]. Since COVID-19 disease emerged first in China, it's rapidly become a worldwide threat and it's declared as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). From that time, this disease has spread to 216 countries and territories around the world, with worldwide 144 million confirmed cases and 3.07 million deaths and the growth of COVID-19 cases also increases rapidly in Bangladesh with more than 727k of total cases and 10,588 deaths (World Health Organization statistics as on April 20, 2021) [3]. The clinical outcomes of COVID-19 can vary from asymptomatic to a mild to severe state. Although patients with COVID-19 present primarily with various symptoms like fever, cough, dyspnea, myalgia, and fatigue [4, 5].

CASE REPORT

This Global pandemic has a serious psychological impact and mental health problems throughout the entire world. Depression, suicidal behavior, loneliness, anxiety, fear of losing a loved one, job insecurities, lack of proper medical treatment, financial crisis are the extreme consequences of COVID-19 related psychological burdens, which is reported in many countries including Bangladesh [6,7]. The COVID-19 pandemic crumbles up the personal, professional and social life of Bangladeshi people. COVID-19 is a concernment for people because of its infective potential and the uncertainty of manifestations and prognosis. To control the rapid spread of this disease, physical distancing rules imposed including lockdown, restrictions on social gatherings and cultural activities and border embrace. These restrictions have a remarkable impact on the social, psychological and economic benefit of Bangladeshi people through this pandemic situation. Domestic violence has also increased as the victims are restricted to stay in the same place.

Although the rapid spread of this highly contagious disease is only prevented by testing more and more suspected patients and separating the positive tested patients from the healthy ones, the rate of COVID-19 test is decreasing day by day in Bangladesh. It is a threat for a densely populated (170

million) country like Bangladesh to control the spread of coronavirus disease with limited resources [8]. Various psychological factors affect the Bangladeshi people for the unwillingness of COVID-19 test. A nationwide online survey was conducted during April 2020 to June 2020 by a magazine related to mental health named "Moner Khbor". Among 560 participants who gave their opinion about the reluctance of testing COVID-19, 65% were male and 35% female. 23.57% participants think that the rate of COVID-19 test is decreasing due to facing lots of troubles and harassments during test procedure. 22.32% participants believed that people lost their credibility per test and 16.07% believed that the risk of infection increases when they go to hospital for a test. Several psychological reasons were found from that survey which is responsible for the decreasing rate of COVID-19 tests in Bangladesh. Those are as follows,

1. Hospital authority takes a huge amount of test fees, which is irrational and lower class people cannot afford it.
2. Insufficient information about the place/hospital of the test.
3. Direct medical treatment from the physician's clinical diagnosis without relying on the results of the test.
4. It takes a long time to get the report of the test and suffering increases.
5. People fear to separate from their near and dear ones if they tested positive for COVID-19.
6. Only aged patients have the risk of death due to this disease and young people do not need the test.
7. COVID-19 test report is only needed for hospital admission and job.
8. People take COVID-19 as a normal disease and ignore it.
9. Because of decentralization test facilities, there is no availability and accessibility to test for all sectors of people.
10. Most of the people are unaware about COVID-19 disease and don't know anything about the test procedure of this disease.
11. Internationally declared that as a developing country, the death rate of COVID-19 disease would be high in Bangladesh, but actually the rate was lower than the suspected level.
12. People also think that COVID-19 test is unnecessary because anything can be possible in Bangladesh by money and also for the living environment of maximum Bangladeshi people.

DISCUSSION

Bangladesh is now the 16th worst hit country in the world for coronavirus disease in terms of total number of patients. The average daily test number is around thirteen thousand [9].

According to worldometer information, only 31,454 COVID-19 tests have been performed against every one million people in Bangladesh [9]. Though the

prevalence of daily new infections, many people are unwilling to follow the government's health safety guidelines. If the rules are not enforced strictly, it will be a severer crisis in Bangladesh. It would be wrong to think that coronavirus will vanish and we'll go back to our normal previous life. Bangladesh may get long-term cycle infections if proper tests are not possible to understand the real situation. It is found that the rate of infection is declining from the data provided by the government. But this data doesn't indicate the information of area-based infections and whether it is increasing or decreasing. An antibody test would reveal the area-based infection rate which is never done in Bangladesh. RT-PCR testing system is only used in Bangladesh for coronavirus diagnosis, which is the most reliable testing system in the world to detect the coronavirus [10]. Antigen test is also needed for rapid tests with low cost. Although more RT-PCR labs have been set up for COVID-19 testing, the number of tests per day has decreased rapidly. Low testing tendency or people's low interest for their sample test is a disquieting indication for the country. Psychological factors play an influential role for declining the testing rate in Bangladesh. Most of the patients do not have proper knowledge about the disease and its consequences. They take it as a normal viral fever. Most of the people suffering from mild fever and cold do not go to hospital for tests as they think that this disease has somehow gradually vanished. Government has decided to charge for the tests, which were free until the end of June for poor people who cannot afford it anymore. Charges for tests and doctor's prescription required for testing procedure are the major reasons behind people avoiding getting tested. People have lost their confidence in the testing system and they consider it a problem as long time is needed to get the test result. Most of the people think that it's a full waste of money and time. The decrease in infection rate makes the people unwilling to test. Fear of separation from the household member if they are tested positive is also an important psychological factor among the people to avoid the test.

CONCLUSION

As psychological factors plays an influential role for the declining rate of COVID-19 test in Bangladesh, different psychosocial interventions should be implemented by government and various institutions or NGO's to lesson about the disease in all part of the country and help patients, societies and families deal with the mighty intimidation on physical and mental health. Mental health professionals and social workers also help the patients and larger community to gather proper knowledge about COVID-19 disease, understand the potential impact of the virus. Psychological assistance services, including telephone, internet, advertisement, television and application-based counseling or intervention about this horrific disease and the importance of the testing procedure. Since more testing and separating COVID-19 infected patients is

the only way to prevent the transmission of this disease, public consciousness and awareness should be improved about COVID-19 and encouraged them for testing.

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