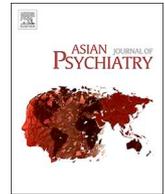




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Letter to the Editor

Iranian mental health during the COVID-19 epidemic

What has been the focus of attention of health care providers around the world for the last two months has been the problem of the new coronavirus (Coronavirus disease-2019 - COVID-19) and its spread to other geographical locations after the outbreak in Wuhan, China (Bo et al., 2020). The spread of the virus, given the mentality of how the Chinese health care system handled the disease and the daily deaths, problems and quarantines associated with it, has been closely monitored by various groups of people in different countries (Jung et al., 2020).

One of the most stressful situations is the unpredictability of the situation and the uncertainty of when to control the disease and the seriousness of the risk. These, along with some analysis and misinformation, can heighten concern among the masses (Bao et al., 2020). On the other hand, challenges and stress can trigger common mental disorder, such as anxiety and depression (Dar et al., 2017).

According to similar epidemics and pandemics, in such cases, serious concerns such as fear of death can arise among patients, and feelings of loneliness and anger can develop among people who are quarantined (Xiang et al., 2020). In addition, people who are quarantined lose face-to-face connections and traditional social interventions, and this is a stressful phenomenon (Zhang et al., 2020). It can be inferred from these points that psychological interventions in the face of such crises are part of the health care system in the context of public health emergencies (Zhou et al., 2019).

It seems that, in addition to efforts at various levels to prevent the spread of the disease and other worrisome conditions, special attention should be paid to the mental health issues of the community. Presented programs for the screening of psychiatric disorders including anxiety and depression among patients and even caregivers and treatment and management of cases by employing psychiatrists, psychologists and other relevant medical groups, especially in quarantine cases, due to the severity of the vulnerability and the availability of sufficient information for other groups of society, in order to know the status quo and create a sense of trust, seem necessary (Xiang et al., 2020).

Given the impact of social capital on similar critical conditions in Iran (Badrfam and Zandifar, 2019), considering the role of its dimensions in this regard seems to be very important and in Iranian society which has a good position in terms of social capital status (Mohammadi et al., 2019), it can be used to help improve the existing situation.

However, what is important is that controlling the disease requires proper and comprehensive management and attention to their mental health care. Adhering to all the rules mentioned, along with cohesion and relying on social capital, seems to be the only possible way to overcome the existing situation.

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Declaration of Competing Interest

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