

LETTER TO EDITOR

The Role of Health Literacy Promotion in Epidemic Control Corona 19

Dear Editor

In late December 2019, a new kind of Coronavirus, called COVID19, was reported from Wuhan, China. By the fast spread of the virus in China and then in all countries, the people around the world have been deeply frightened. The World Health Organization (WHO) has announced the spread of the virus as the main cause of public health emergencies. The fast spread of the virus and lack of vaccine and definite and specific treatment could be addressed as the main reasons that countries are faced with a huge number of infected people and also confronted them with big challenges in different aspects of health, economic, political, and social. Some of these challenges are directly or indirectly related to the health literacy of people and improving it could solve or at least reduce the challenges (1).

In the last years, health literacy has been considered as one of the most important and determinative factors of health. Health literacy has known as a skill for health decision making in the difficult situation of the patients.

The health literacy as a social and cognitive skill has different dimensions such as access, appraising, understanding, and performing the obtained health knowledge and information. The ability to comprehend the educational provision in the patients, as a dimension of health literacy, is significantly important (2).

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Health literacy means to obtain health information from the right sources, and by correct interpretation of information use them appropriately in improving the health level of ourselves. Improving the health literacy leads to some important outcomes such as increasing patient's potential abilities for making a conscious decision, reducing health hazards, enhancing disease prevention and safety, increasing the life and care quality of people. An acceptable level of health literacy makes people have a better understanding and interpretation of different challenges that are tied to their health, and then have a better reaction against pathogens and look after themselves and those around them (3).

By forming the coronavirus outbreak crisis, the importance of health literacy is becoming clearer than any other time. The outbreak could be prevented by promotion the health literacy. The health literacy, in turn, could be improved by creating culture, widely providing the necessary training amongst people about the current epidemic and disease-preventing methods such as improving public health education, personal protection proceeding (like masks), the right way of coughing, hand hygiene and avoiding contact with people. Also, strengthen information and educational campaigns, providing the necessary incentives and supports to household members, and utilizing the remote medical capacity could be addressed as another method that the governments could use to manage and control the crisis and reduce the process of infection and mortality from the disease (4).

Despite the high importance of health literacy, the topic has been paid less attention in Iran. Also, neglecting the personal health, improper self-medication, taking medications that have not been confirmed by a health organization, releasing contaminated masks and gloves in the

environment, relying on the information of the virtual spaces (cyberspace), huge unnecessary car traffic in streets display the poor performance (function-operation) of people against the coronavirus outbreak crisis. Therefore, it could be concluded that health literacy, public health status, preventive behaviors, and utilizing health services are the most effective ways that could help the planners, politicians, and health officials to control the disease (1-5)].

Despite all the unfortunate consequences, the coronavirus outbreak is a sign (fillip) to measure the level of health literacy in society. People must be able to get the right information about the virus from the right sources and learn how to exert the suitable approach to manage the situation. Without any doubt, the role of the media in this matter is essential, determinative and vital. The media experts (specialists) and also informants with enough knowledge about the production infrastructure and dissemination of information could play an important and essential role in making the right behavior pattern in dealing with crises (6).

Coronavirus is not the first and will not be the last epidemic in the world. That the people and the politicians in different areas of society realize how and in what way manage and lead the crisis is an important issue. In this regard, the specialist must take time, investigate the situations and get experiences from this crisis and similar ones and come up with the proper behavior patterns for people and governments. Certainly, a suitable behavioral pattern will bring the least financial and spiritual cost to the society. Producer and disseminator of the information, such as the media, government officials, specialists in different areas, such as doctors, nurses and psychologists, and even people should be noted in creating a behavioral pattern (7).

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