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Letter to Editor

COVID-19 and the Challenges to the Healthcare System in Iran

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Dear Editor,

The sudden spread of the coronavirus in the world has affected the healthcare system of countries worldwide (1), and the policymakers did not have enough time to respond and adapt to the situation, leading to unprecedented disruption in the global healthcare system. Since the healthcare system of any country is the basic foundation to fight against COVID-19 at the national level, a key question is posed: "Is the current healthcare system qualified to respond to the pandemic?" (2). Evidence shows that, despite all advances in the past decades, the sudden outbreak of COVID-19 has made healthcare systems incapable of managing the disease, especially in the field of diagnosis and screening (3).

As it is important for health and treatment systems to be ready and responsive in the face of the COVID-19 epidemic, five main factors affect the health system's responsiveness and readiness including community-based interventions, management interventions, social and economic factors, the readiness of hospitals and health centers, and related environmental factor (4,5).

In Iran, besides all the common challenges of COVID-19, international sanctions and the traditional nature of the healthcare system have doubled the challenge of controlling COVID-19. Iran's healthcare system must be updated based on artificial intelligence technology and the Internet of Things (IoT) to deal with the present and possible future mutations. Remote medicine and care are among the most critical components. This update leads to reducing face-to-face visits, remote service delivery, clinical decision-making, compensating for the lack of human resources, and creating patient-centered collaboration through the medical data-sharing system to prevent the spread of the virus (6,7) .

Finally, it is essential to use the experiences of other countries to improve the health system. Establishing public-private partnership, empowering, training, and enhancing the skills of the medical community to adapt to digital methods and technologies, implementing the public healthcare system, paying attention to hardware and software infrastructures, and enhancing the culture of using information technology in the health system help improve the structure from traditional to digital. The final recommendation is to set up a digital healthcare system that will help the healthcare system of Iran face fewer challenges in potential upcoming outbreaks.

Competing Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

Ethical Approval

Not applicable.

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