

# A Tribute to the Unarmed Frontline Covid Warriors

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**Abstract—** The COVID-19 since its outbreak in December 2020 took a heavy toll and crippled the society at large and the care providers in general. In Iran almost a hundred physicians laid their lives in fighting the pandemic. Since they contacted the disease while serving in the frontline treating the COVID-19 patients, they were posthumously declared as martyrs or the sacred COVID warriors.

**Keywords—** COVID-19, warriors, pandemic, healthcare

## Current status of COVID-19 pandemic

The coronavirus (COVID-19) emerged for the first time in December 2019, in Wuhan, China, and rampaged the entire world like a hurricane. World Health Organization (WHO) recognized it as a pandemic in March, 2020 according to its accelerated contagious state. Globally, as of 3:13pm CEST, 22 September 2020, there have been 31,174,627 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 962,613 deaths, reported to WHO, since the beginning of corona outbreak [1]. It seems that it is the worst pandemic that we have to battle in recent recorded history.

Iran was perhaps the second country that was affected with this deadly virus after China. At the very start owing to its extensive and sweeping spread, about 30 thousand hospital beds were officially allocated for COVID patients, and in a very short span of time 50% of the total intensive care unit (ICU) beds were occupied [2]. About three million, one hundred and sixty thousand patients are diagnosed till now (3,161,894 diagnosed cases). This number indicates confirmed cases with the available COVID tests that we had at our disposal owing to the sanctions and economic blockade imposed on Iran [2]. Luckily there have been 318,270 recoveries reported from all the admitted COVID-19 patients. The cost entailed was more than  $2.2 \times 10^9$  US dollars ( $6500 \times 10^{10}$  Rials) [2].

## Exalted role of COVID warriors

This is an alarming crisis as far as the statistics display which could hardly have been managed without the engagement of the healthcare professionals. Since the coronavirus outbreak, a substantial number of doctors have succumbed to the deadly clutches of COVID -19 while they were engaged in the treatment of these patients in the wards or the ICUs. These doctors who sacrificed their lives in the sacred mission of caring for their patients could well be remembered in the history as heroes, and all we can do is to pay our homage and profound gratitude to them for their sacrifices in the COVID times. According to the current statistics, so far around 140 physicians and nurses have passed away while working and caring for the COVID-19 patients [2]. According to a decree issued by the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, all those personnel who laid down their lives in the sacred mission of caring for the COVID-19 patients would henceforth be declared as martyrs with all the amenities and facilities attached to this title of a martyr. This decree had been issued to compensate the incalculable services rendered by the health professionals while on duty and directly looking after the unfortunate sick patients of COVID-19. This step and noble gesture was highly hailed and received a welcome response from the entire nation. This designation of a martyr to these warriors and heroes is an unprecedented step not recorded so far in the annals of contemporary medical history, and it would go down in history for generations to recall the dreaded era of COVID-19 pandemic.

Although pandemics have a global scope affecting everyone but their effects on the population are disproportionate. In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, people from the lower socio-economic status are invariably the worst affected, and perhaps this could be attributed to their meagre means of income which could affect their inability to observe the recommended protocols such as social distancing. Such a situation has a direct impact on the health care

system doubling their responsibilities in providing the necessary care to this class of people not only in terms of medical care but also in terms of providing the necessary monetary and psychological support as well.

The outbreak of COVID-19 significantly influenced the health care system. Academic centers in Iran provided national guidelines and local protocols for various specialties such as neurosurgery, general surgery, anesthesiology, etc. [3]. Frequent tests, and protocol based admission for elective surgeries; using personal protective equipment and distancing were applied in all the centers as outlined in the national protocols. However, exposures still exist and continue due to the asymptomatic infected patients, emergency cases and lack of resources for routine COVID tests. Neurosurgeons unlike anesthesiologists are not in the front line of fighting COVID-19; however, they commonly care for critically ill patients who present with intracranial hematomas, rapidly expanding tumors, traumatic brain injuries, spinal cord injuries, and compressive myelopathies during the current COVID-19 era.

#### **Impact on Education**

Educational activities at the university level have been adversely affected, and as classes cannot be conducted in the age old traditional manner, virtual classes are being conducted to allay the anxieties of the students. Obviously, virtual classes cannot take the place of the traditional didactic lectures. However, there has been a tremendous development in the correct and scientific development of the virtual classes which are perhaps the only options that we have at our disposal to continue the chain of educational activities at the university level to appease the academic needs and hunger of the students. This has led to a tremendous progress and helped us in meeting our educational needs during the current crisis. Webinars and telemedicine have also both made a tremendous progress and boost in the fields of medical education and treatment planning. In a way, the COVID -19 pandemic helped us in evolving new strategies and availing of new opportunities in reinforcing and enhancing our capabilities in the health care system. We look forward for the day when the menace of COVID-19 is vanished once and for all, and professionals in the health care system take a sigh of relief and start their activities without any fear or psychological stress.

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