

**Letter to the
Editor**

Shortage of PPEs in Pakistan; A health risk for Doctors and other health care professionals during the COVID-19

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- ¹ Conception of study
- ¹ Experimentation/Study conduction
- ¹ Analysis/Interpretation/Discussion
- ¹ Manuscript Writing
- ¹ Critical Review
- ¹ Facilitation and Material analysis

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Introduction

On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization declared the coronavirus disease, more commonly known as COVID-19, a pandemic due to the number of individuals and countries affected including their socioeconomic status along with mortality rate. Center for Disease Control and Prevention and other funding agencies working to minimize the spread of COVID-19; as a result, many changes in our daily lives are being suggested.¹ They continuously monitored the outbreak of COVID-19 and also issued the guidelines for both health care professionals and consumers. Allowing medical care includes telehealth coverage, nutritious, and wholesome food as per the COVID-19 response during this state of a public health emergency.

During the outbreak of COVID-19, the pharmacies and wholesale market are facing a shortage of Personal Protective Equipments (PPEs) due to besotted usage by doctors, nurses, paramedical staff, and the common public to protect themselves from the contagious and infectious diseases. Regarding the concern of health safety for medical health professionals are very cautious in regard with fighting against the COVID-19 and demanding for PPEs that is much legal, logical

and necessary as per the guidelines of WHO.² Three doctors have died during the treatment of coronavirus affected patients and >75 doctors are affected from the disease.³ After this act doctors protest in the Southwestern Pakistan City of Quetta for demanding of PPEs including protective kits for health care professionals for coronavirus medical gear; among them, 67 doctors were arrested as said by the union representative of Young Doctor Association (YDA).⁴ As per 13th April 2020 more than 5374 are Covid-19 patients and 93 deaths are faced due to shortage of PPEs; as Secretary-General Pakistan Medical Association Qaiser Sajjad, explained in a press conference on April 5th that "Doctors are Frontline soldiers in the fight against the Corona and we need more and more doctors are ready to provide their services to reduced the collapse and overburden of the health care worker against for COVID-19".⁵ Health care workers that are fighting "unarmed" against COVID-19 should be fully equipped with PPEs including surgical mask, N-95 respirator, gloves, goggles, gowns, face shields, hand sanitizer. For screening of COVID-19; trained frontline health care professionals are appointed with proper triage system to reduce the overburden and transformation of infection to other individuals.⁶

N-95, N-100 respirator, surgical masks, and suit kits are dire needs of the health care professional. These PPEs are discarded after each visit of doctor/paramedical staff to patients while the crowd of ill patients has been growing with a limited supply of PPEs. Some well-known and literate peoples started to buy these PPEs like masks, gloves, overalls, and other medical equipment items for their families. Officials of public and private hospitals are claiming the unavailability of PPEs, worried about their health including their families. Including PPEs, other medical products used for diagnostic and treatment purposes are also hoarded and steep high in priced by the distributors. Hospitals and other health facilities are naïve of PPEs.⁷

Making exporters/distributor millionaire by exporting with higher prices in the supermarket with extremely exorbitant rates, for that federal health and other agencies are claimed that nexus of distributors/importers of medical equipment cause shortage of PPEs.⁸ The purpose of this note is to outline public health and social measures useful for slowing or stopping the spread of COVID-19 at the national or community level. These measures include detecting, contact tracing, isolating cases, quarantine case, physical and social distancing including mass gathering, international traveling measures. Till that no vaccine and specific medicines are available to reduce the diameter of this pandemic to save the life of individuals.⁹

During the pandemic situation; the national command and control system is working with good efforts with significantly increasing the health budget for national health issues by increasing the number of beds hospitals, intensive care units, equipment including ventilators, and other PPEs. Training to doctors, nurses, and another paramedical staff is done with higher priority to provide higher quality care to critically ill patients. By use of electronic and social media; community education concerning such issues is going on at best level for the prevention of such outbreaks.¹⁰

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