

Globalization, Public Health and COVID-19Rajendra Karkee, PhD¹¹School of Public Health and Community Medicine, B. P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences, Dharan, Nepal**SUMMARY**

Globalisation and 'Global Health' has become an important aspect of public health to be known by a public health graduate. This is illustrated well by recent pandemic of coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The disease has been transmitted to almost all countries starting from Wuhan, China. The spread from one country to other is by travel of infected persons via planes or cruises ships, and after coming to the countries of their origin, the infected persons can transmit the virus to others who have no travel history. Until now, precautions methods are the only ways to slow the transmission. That is why there is importance of public health measures. The simple five messages given now to be protected from this novel corona virus are hand washing, not touching your face, social distance, coughing etiquette and staying home if feeling unwell. All these make up the public health approaches and these approaches are not only in the time of epidemic or pandemic, but all the time to keep society, nation and globe healthy.

Keywords: *Public Health, COVID-19, Globalisation*

Key Messages:

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) emerged as a pandemic mainly because of rapid globalisation including international travel. Globalisation has become an important determinant of Public Health. Adoption of key public health measures remains only ways to protect from this pandemic.

INTRODUCTION

Public health is the collective action for sustained population-wide health improvement.¹ There are various factors that can affect the health of a population. These factors are often summarized as social, economic, political, cultural, and environmental factors. Along with these classical factors, there is another emerging factor in 21st century; that is globalisation.² Globalisation and 'Global Health' has become an important aspect of public health to be known by a public health graduates. Not only transmissions of diseases across borders are threat but also economic policies, politics, trade treaties, expansion of multinational companies and consumption of foods affect health worldwide.³

In this century, the world is becoming more and more a 'global village' due to rapid globalisation and complex interdependence. Production and consumption pattern of goods and services have made nations more interdependent to each other. Mobility of people, flow of resources and technologies, and transmission of diseases and information across borders have become instant. The flow can occur in either direction from high to low and middle income countries and vice versa. Consequently, public health issues of any countries can become global health risks and take global attention.⁴

This is illustrated well by recent pandemic of coronavirus disease (COVID-19). When China first reported to the WHO Country Office in China about outbreak of pneumonia of unknown cause, detected in the city of Wuhan in Hubei province, on 31 December, 2019, only few would have thought that it would become global pandemic. According to the authorities in Wuhan, the initial patients were operating dealers or vendors in the Huanan Seafood market, where live animals used to be sold including bats and snakes. China shared the genetic sequence of the novel corona virus to the world in 12 January 2020. There was a first case of this virus confirmed outside of China in Thailand in 13 January, 2020.⁵

DISCUSSION

But soon within two months of emergence, this corona virus has spread to all continents in 196 countries. As of march 24, 2020, there are a total of 381, 749 cases, 16558 deaths and 102429 cases recovered. This increased to a total of 45,42,910 cases and 307, 696 deaths by May 16, 2020. The spread from one country to other is by travel of infected persons via planes

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or cruises ships, and after coming to the countries of their origin, the infected persons can transmit the virus to others who have no travel history. This type of transmission is known as community transmission. The transmission can go exponential via one person to another when infected persons come in contact with other healthy persons. The route of human-to-human transmission of this virus is either via respiratory droplets or contact of infected persons.⁶ Since, the incubation period is two weeks, many infected persons might not know when and from whom they can be infected. So, precautions methods are the only ways to slow the transmission. That is why there is importance of public health measures. It is acknowledged that many more, probably throughout China, would have been infected or died if strict timely preventive measures would not have been imposed. Timely lockdown of the epicentre of the outbreak, the Wuhan, restricting the movement of people within the city and out of the city is considered as the prime strategy to contain the spread of infection. This is called quarantine, which means separation and restriction of the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick. If someone is positive, he/she should be isolated, that means separation of such people from people who are not sick. The early detection of cases, called primary prevention, and isolating them will help to break the exponential infection of this virus. Contact tracing is very important to identify people who came in contact with the infected individual so that the transmission cycle can be interrupted further.

Among these, the other parts of control strategy lie on the capacity of state to act as 'Medical Police' and the individual behaviour themselves. 'Medical Police' is an important public health approach. It means restriction of one's freedom for the

benefit of whole community. State should be capable and should intervene when an individual's actions affect others. Next, your own behaviour and compliance is responsible for your own health, your family health and then community health. The simple five messages given now to be protected from this novel corona virus are hand washing, not touching your face, social distance, coughing etiquette and staying home if feeling unwell. All these make up the public health approaches and these approaches are not only in the time of epidemic or pandemic, but all the time to keep society, nation and globe healthy.

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