

Editorial Article

Epidemic or Pandemic: Yesterday was a Plague, Now Coronavirus, What's Next...?

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Received Date: April 14, 2021

Publication Date: May 01, 2021

An epidemic is a term that is often broadly used to describe any problem that has grown out of control. An epidemic is an outbreak of a disease that occurs over a wide geographic area and affects an exceptionally high proportion of the population. In contrast, the term pandemic relates to geographic spread and is used to describe a disease that affects a whole country or the entire world [1, 2]. Some of the notable pandemics include HIV, which has killed over 39 million people since 1982, there have been other equally devastating pandemics in history. For our yesterday, the plague of Justinian of 541 A.D. was attributed to the bubonic plague and wiped out 25-50 million people in one year. Globally, the Black plague killed more than 75 million people from 1347 to 1351. The Spanish flu pandemic of 1918 killed well over 50 million people in one year, including 675,000 Americans. The smallpox pandemic of the 20th century claimed over 300 to 500 million lives.

The first cases of coronavirus infection in Saudi Arabia, specifically Jeddah, were reported on June 13, 2012; after this outbreak, the coronavirus continued to spread across many countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, and America [1–4]. Coronavirus was first identified as a cause of the common cold in 1960. In one study carried out in Canada in 2001, more than 500 patients presented with flu-like symptoms. Until 2002, the coronavirus was considered a relatively simple, nonfatal virus; however, an outbreak in 2002–2003 in Guangdong province in China, which resulted in spread to many other countries, including Thailand, Vietnam, Taiwan, Hong Kong Singapore, and the United States of America, caused severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and high mortality rates in over 1000 patients. After this outbreak, microbiologists and infectious disease experts focused on understanding the pathogenesis of the disease and discovered that this infection was caused by a new form of coronavirus.



The world of tomorrow is expected to be free of some infection-contagious diseases like smallpox, dracunculiasis and very probably paralyzing poliomyelitis. Other preventable diseases, such as measles, whooping cough, diphtheria, tetanus, rabies, some forms of meningitis, yellow fever and episodes of disseminated tuberculosis will greatly diminish in their rates of Morbi-lethality; the elimination of some, and the eradication of measles, are expected by 2030. Also, some diseases such as diarrhea (including cholera), geo-helminthiasis, some severe respiratory tract infections and the majority of vector-transmitted infectious diseases will decrease due to improvements in potable water services, drainage, and sanitary food control. Our then world cannot be completely free from infectious diseases due to reduction in the immunocompetence as a result of the aging of the population, chemotherapies, autoimmune pathology, susceptible lifestyles, urbanization, synthetic foods consumption, drug addiction, sexual liberation, global commerce, antibiotic-multi resistant microbial flora, global warming, deforestation, undesirable use of pesticides and fertilizers, poverty, violence and deprivation will fuel emergence and re-emergence of infectious diseases already controlled in the past.

Our esteemed readers should hold their fates that as long as the world continues to globalize and urbanize, both epidemics and pandemics are expected; man is expected to galvanize new tools around new drugs and vaccine developments to cope with whatever 'next' will be.

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Volume 2 Issue 4 May 2021

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