

A Rapid Assessment on COVID-19 Preparedness and Response among Public and Private Health Care Providers in Myanmar

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Abstract

The pandemic attack of SARS-CoV-2 disease (COVID-19) is also affecting Myanmar and this online survey was conducted among public and private health care providers in Myanmar from 16th to 25th April 2020 with the aim to assess COVID-19 preparedness and response among public and private health care providers in Myanmar.

There were 1305 health care providers from all 15 States and Regions in Myanmar, more than one-third (38%) was from Yangon Region and 986 (76%) were public health care providers. Of the total respondents, (60%) were Medical Doctors, (23%) were Basic Health Service Professionals, (6%) were Nurses, (2%) were Dentists, and (9%) were others.

Relating to the access to COVID-19 information, Facebook and website of Ministry of Health and Sport is the most commonly used platform to access COVID-19 information among health care providers (85% and 71%) followed by Television (45%).

Communication methods for COVID-19 response: Messenger, Facebook , and telephone is the most commonly used communication methods for COVID-19 response by health care providers. To communicate with communities, health care providers mostly used telephone.

Awareness on COVID-19: Regarding awareness on physical distancing, 91% had the correct answer that physical distancing is needed both outside and inside home, 67% correctly responded that the distance for physical distancing is 6 feet. Almost all (99%) know the danger signs of COVID-19. Majority (90%) know proper reporting and referring COVID-19 suspect cases, (95%) clearly knew how to protect themselves from contracting the virus from the patients or from their workplaces, and (74%) knew how to wear PPE properly.

Needs and Availability of Essential Equipment for COVID-19 response: Among the personal protective equipment, less than 20% of respondents mentioned they had enough PPE, isolation suite, N95 mask. Almost half of health care providers answered they had enough surgical gloves and hygiene facilities.

Challenges in COVID-19 response: Regardless of background, and role and responsibilities, the most described challenge was related to shortage of human resource and supply for personal protective equipment, poor infrastructure for the preparations of isolation wards at hospitals, and quarantine sites. The second most reported challenge was related to having no clear and specific information, guidelines, and instructions for COVID-19 response, and there were no guidelines for general practitioners, and dentists. The third most stated challenge was related to poor feedback mechanism of test results to respective health departments, and health care providers. The fourth most common responded challenge included poor collaboration among health departments, and also with other administrative department. Some health care providers described that they had to pay for transportation charges of samples to laboratory. Being discriminated by some communities, having psychologically burn out, being stressful, having worries and fears to be infected with the COVID-19 were described by few respondents.

Suggestions from health care providers for COVID-19 response: The most reported suggestions were to support certain amount of bills for telephone and internet to health care providers, to create an online platform for health care providers for the timely communication of information including the test results.

Conclusion and Recommendations: Health care providers in Myanmar mostly used the online platform to access COVID-19 information as well as to communicate each other. The awareness on COVID-19 was high in most of them. Personal protective equipment was reported as shortage by most of the health care providers from different level of health care facilities. Many other challenges were faced by health care providers in response to COVID-19 such as resource, guidelines, communications, collaboration, cost incurred for sample transportation, and psychological burning out.