

Stress Reduction Strategies in the Coronavirus Pandemic

Coronavirus outbreak is spreading quickly. Thousands have been sickened by the new coronavirus in many countries, including Iran. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the outbreak was first reported by Chinese officials on December 31, 2019, in Wuhan, a city of 11 million in Hubei province. To date, 40,000 people around the world have been affected.^[1-3] Large-scale outbreak of the new coronavirus has direct and consequential social impacts. For instance, widespread public panic during disease outbreaks can lead to mental health problems in the general population.^[4] The surrounding general population with subsequent rapid spread is at risk of developing fear, social isolation, and anxiety. This fear can spread rapidly and is not limited to those experiencing the event directly. Those who are affected include family members of the victims and survivors and those who are exposed through broadcast images. Psychological suffering is usually more prevalent than physical suffering during the outbreak of infectious diseases.^[5] For example, China reported the prevalence of generalized anxiety disorder and depressive symptoms from fears of their association with coronavirus 34% and 18.1%, respectively. Depression was reported to be higher in the young population compare with the older ones.^[6,7] With the rapid increases in the number of confirmed cases across the word along with the increasing internet access, spreading fake news can make fear and anxiety worsen. The spread of fake news and cyber propaganda can harm the mental health condition.

The following strategies are suggested to reduce people's stress following the coronavirus pandemic:

1. Carefully consider the sources of information, information context, with the affirmative standard regarding the reliability of the information's source
2. Spend more time with family and friends or on hobbies rather than find things to resent in the news
3. Focus on the facts about the virus and the prevention of the disease. Unless you have been in close contact with someone who has the coronavirus, you are likely to be safe
4. Basic infectious disease principles are likely to cure the spread of this virus including washing hands regularly, covering cough and sneezes with a tissue, avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth with your hands, stay home from work or school if you have fever, and stay away from people who have signs of a respiratory tract infection
5. Given the current spread of this virus, we should not

panic, even though we are dealing with a novel and serious pathogen. Those who have signs of respiratory tract infection such as fever, chills, dry cough, sneezing, shortness of breath, and runny nose should visit the doctor

6. People with a history of psychiatric disorders, such as obsessive-compulsive disorder, and hypochondriasis should be consulted with a psychiatrist to avoid situations that trigger or worsen their symptoms
7. The information gained from other serious viruses outbreaks such as SARS and MERS will help. As more information about the virus becomes available, public health organizations such as WHO and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) will be sharing key strategies and information worldwide to manage the disease and keep the virus under control.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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Letter to Editor

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