

Why Did the Use of the Mask not Control the Infection Caused by COVID-19 in the World? Where is the Missing Loop?

Dear Editor,

The spread of COVID-19 in December 2019 and the spread of this infection led to a global epidemic, and as of October 26, 2021, more than 243 million confirmed infected cases, and over 4953,246 deaths were reported globally.^[1,2]

One of the key attempts by the international community to deal with the spread of this disease was to promote the first-line care prevention, that is, to wash hands and use face coverings, including masks.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization (WHO) recommend that individuals wear masks in communal places when one is unable to keep the 6-ft. distance from another. In such a situation, and according to the guidelines, face masks will prevent the spread of COVID-19 to others.^[3,4] Also, due to the increase in vaccination, exposure to new species of COVID-19 still makes the use of masks effective in reducing the incidence. Serious question is that despite the fact that more people in the community use masks, the prevalence of COVID-19 in the community continues, what is the reason?

The WHO has provided further guidelines on how masks should be worn: Hands should be washed prior to using the mask, to use the mask using its straps to prevent contamination, place the mask fully on your face in a way that it completely covers mouth and nose, and there are no openings around it, do not touch the mask, wash your hands before removing the mask from face, and put the mask in a clean box or container. For a later use, take the reusable mask out of the box and wash it with disinfectants or soap and water, at least once a day, and then wash your hands once done and repeat the steps.^[1-5]

Such a recommendation not only outlines the procedure to use a mask but also emphasizes on its proper use. In all countries of the world, especially in developing nations, the following issues will turn a protective factor such as a mask into a transmission agent: improper use, failure to wash the mask, leaving contaminated masks in the environment, repeated use of masks, frequent touching of the face covering, and subsequently its contamination while the covering is on the face.^[3-5]

In the current situation and the sharp increase in the number of patients, use of masks, although ineffective on the disease itself, may prevent the spread of the virus through its carriers. Nevertheless, however, appropriate educational measures should be considered for all groups in the community regarding the proper use of the mask. Otherwise, the face coverings, including masks, could become a serious risk factor for spreading the virus and further complicating the situation. Thus, it is necessary to wear masks, yet instead of imposing fines and punishments on people, paying special attention to offering training for the correct use of face coverings should be considered by health organizations and the international authorities.

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Conflicts of interest

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