Demographic Characteristics of 1082 Positive Cases of COVID-19 Patients: Experience at National Referral Laboratory of Bangladesh

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Abstract

Background: COVID-19 has now become a pandemic. Objective: The aim of this study was to characterize the demographic features with infection rate of SARS-CoV-2 in 4/5 divisions of Bangladesh. Methodology: This cross-sectional study was conducted at National Institute of Laboratory Medicine and Referral Center, Dhaka, Bangladesh from 15th April to 30th April, 2020. It was performed RT-PCR for 2462 cases within the time frame and 1082 samples were positive for SARS CoV-2. Patient demographic characteristics including age, gender, occupation and blood group was investigated. Results: The mean age of positive cases was 40.2 ± 15.33 years, 426 (39%) cases were 25-39 years of age. The majority of cases were male (71%) and the predominant blood group was B positive (37%). Conclusions: In conclusion male gender, younger age and blood group B positive are more commonly suffering from COVID-19 infection. [Bangladesh Journal of Infectious Diseases, October 2020; 7(suppl_2): S22-S26]

Keywords: COVID-19; SARS-COV-2; Demographic features; Blood group; B positive

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Introduction

In late December 2019, several cases of pneumonia with an unknown cause were reported in Wuhan, China, and later in January 2020, Chinese center for disease control and prevention (CDC) identified a new type of coronavirus from those pneumonia cases\(^1\). The World Health Organization (WHO) chose the official name of COVID-19 (stand for coronavirus disease 2019), for the disease, as well as the term SARS–COV-2 (severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2) for the virus\(^2\). WHO announced COVID-19 as a pandemic in March 11, 2020 after it had spread to more than 100 countries and resulted in tens of thousands of cases within a few months\(^3\).

SARS-CoV-2 is a member of the Corona virididae family that consists of a single-stranded positive-sense RNA, named for the crown like spikes on its surface\(^4\). So far, two human infections by viruses related to Corona virididae family are known: Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), caused by SARS-CoV, which emerged in China in 2002 and spread across 37 countries, and the Middle-East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), caused by MERS-CoV, which was first seen in Saudi Arabia in 2012. SARS-COV-2 is genetically related to SARS-CoV with both of them being beta-corona viruses\(^4,5\).

Bangladesh faces significant challenges in combating COVID-19 as it is a densely populated country and also houses a million stateless Rohingya refugees in sprawling refugee camps that are conducive to the spread of epidemics. It also has significant migrant populations living in Italy, a COVID-affected country\(^6,7\). In Bangladesh, however, the first case was reported on March 8, 2020\(^9,9\). Government issued a lock down condition ordering all public and private offices to be closed, with the exception for emergency services. People have been asked to practice social distancing and stay at home. Public transport was limited and advice was given to avoid them. This lockdown was extended several times which was started from 23\(^{rd}\) March until officially ceasing on 30 May 2020 to limit the spreading of this novel corona virus infection throughout the country\(^10,11\). In spite of taking necessary strategies to control this pandemic the novel coronavirus has already been spread to all 64 districts of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is the second most affected country in South Asia, after India\(^12\). More than 70% of the 10,143 coronavirus cases detected in Bangladesh have been reported in the Dhaka division and nearly half of them are in the capital, Dhaka\(^13\). By the time of writing in August 2020, daily thousands of new cases are being reported in Bangladesh affecting almost every corner of the country but information regarding socio-demographic characteristics of COVID-19 affected population is very limited. When an outbreak such as this occurs, organized demographic data and knowledge are equally essential to continue the evaluation required to identify the threats and take needful strategies for containment.

The aim of the study was to characterize the demographic features with infection rate of SARS-CoV-2 in 4/5 divisions of Bangladesh in order to better understand the epidemic of novel corona virus and provide the basis for the future development of control measures and to identify the distribution patterns of Covid-19 and blood group among the positive cases of Bangladesh. This study will also reveal the pattern of Covid-19 in Bangladesh in the world literature.

Methodology

Samples come from all division of Bangladesh in National institute of laboratory medicine and referral center, Dhaka and around 1000 samples were tested for real time PCR for SARS CoV-2 almost every day. A cross sectional study was conducted from 15\(^{th}\) April to 30\(^{th}\) April, 2020. Among 2462 cases with mild or moderate symptoms 1082 cases were confirmed as true Covid-19 cases by RT-PCR assay of nasal and oral swabs. The study was approved by the NILMRC Ethics Committee. Throat and nasal swab specimens from the upper respiratory tract were collected in viral transport medium in the respective hospitals or institute and then transported to our lab with precaution. Here we performed RT-PCR by Sansure Biotech Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Nucleic Acid Diagnostic Kit. The Director General Health Service of Bangladesh provided the RT-PCR reagents. First step was RNA extraction with release reagent provided along with PCR kit. After that 20 μL of the processed specimens were mixed with 30 μL master mix for subsequent real time RT-PCR targeting SARS-CoV-2 ORF and N gene as described in kit manual. SPSS software, version 19 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) was used to analyze the data. Categorical variables were summarized as frequencies and percentages. Reported p-values of <0.05 were considered statistically significant. The analyses were based on non-missing data, and missing data were not imputed. The age and sex distribution were examined and relevant charts were drawn. Sex ratio (male to female) was calculated.
Results

A total of 2462 patients were included in this study, among whom 1082 patients (44.0%) cases were identified as laboratory confirmed COVID-19 cases (Figure I).

Figure I: Positive and Negative Covid-19 Cases

Out of 1082 positive cases 763 cases were male patients (71.0%) and 264 cases were female patients (29.0%) (Figure I, Table 1). Among the 1082 positive cases, the mean of age was 40.2 ± 15.33 years and the median of age was 38 years. The predominant age group was 25 to 39 years followed by 40 to 59 years (Figure II). The occupations of patients were diverse. Civil servants were accounted for 36.0% (400/1082) (Table I).

Table 1: Demographics Characteristic of positive cases (N=1082)

| Characteristics | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------------|-----------|---------|
| Gender          |           |         |
| • Male          | 763       | 71.0    |
| • Female        | 219       | 29.0    |
| Occupation      |           |         |
| • Civil Servant | 400       | 36.96   |
| • Teacher       | 50        | 4.62    |
| • Retired       | 75        | 6.93    |
| • Farmer        | 47        | 4.34    |
| • Self-employed | 150       | 13.86   |
| • Student       | 200       | 18.48   |
| • Private company | 128     | 11.82   |
| • Unknown       | 32        | 2.95    |

Most of the patients were from Dhaka city (575), whereas 480 case were from Sylhet followed by Chattogram, Rajshahi, Rangpur and Khulna division respectively (Figure III).

Figure II: Histogram showing the frequency of the Covid-19 infections in different age groups. Mean age±SD=40.2 (±15.33) years

Figure III: Distribution of Total Cases and Positive Cases in Different Division of Bangladesh

A total number of 400 PCR positive patients with blood group information was in the system. The blood group distribution of 400 patients was A, B, O, AB was 21.0%, 37.0%, 25.0% and 11.0% respectively. Rh (+) was 94.5% and Rh (–) 5.5% cases (Table 2).

Table 2: Blood Group Distribution and Analysis of 400 Covid-19 Diagnosed Patients

| Blood Group | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------|-----------|----------------|
| A Positive  | 85        | 21.0           |
| A Negative  | 4         | 1.0            |
| B Positive  | 148       | 37.0           |
| B Negative  | 5         | 1.5            |
| O Positive  | 100       | 25.0           |
| O Negative  | 8         | 2.0            |
| AB Positive | 45        | 11.0           |
Almost equal predominance of both O (37.0%) and B group in India (32.0%) and neighboring countries such as Bangladesh (31.0% and 33.0%) and Pakistan (30.0% and 40.0%), in contrast to dominance of O and A groups in the European and African populations. This is the first observation of an association between the ABO blood type and COVID-19 in Bangladesh. But it should encourage further investigation of the relationship between the ABO blood group and the COVID-19 mortality.

This is the first study to address the characteristics of Covid-19 patients confirmed by RT-PCR in Bangladesh. The duration of the study was relatively short (15th April to 30th April, 2020), studying a sudden outbreak of an infectious disease, of which 2462 cases during this period were examined which came to our institute for RT PCR. The spread of the pandemic to various geographic locations, age groups and comorbid patients may behave differently and hence these results may be difficult to generalize at national or international level. We cannot analyze the co morbidity and mortality status as we did not have these data.

**Conclusion**

COVID-19 has not yet ended and it’s the major limitation. So far, the Bangladesh government has been fighting the coronavirus with its limited capacity and resources. The frequency of Covid-19 infection is higher in age group of 25-39 years, but there were a higher number of fatalities in younger patients in international studies. As we did not have clinical and others data, so we could not compare the clinical features or mortality among age groups. The results of this study emphasize the significant effect of younger age, male gender and B positive blood group among COVID-19 patients. As COVID-19 is considered a global health threat, it still needs to be investigated deeply.

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| ABO Negative | 5 | 1.5 |
|-------------|---|-----|
| Rh+ | 378 | 94.5 |
| Rh - | 22 | 5.5 |
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