Letters to Editor

The Emergency Challenges of Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic in Brazilian Favelas: How to Face it?

Sir,

Brazil declared the current coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic as a public health emergency. Up to date, Brazil is considered the Latin America’s worst-hit country by COVID-19 pandemic and became the World’s 2nd country in cases. On June 19, 2020, the Brazilian Health Surveillance Secretariat confirmed altogether 1,032,913 cases and 48,954 deaths.[1]

A large portion of the Brazilian population reside in peripheral subnormal cluster regions culturally called favelas [Figure 1].[2] The typical favela has poor infrastructure, where the individuals have an evident difficult to access essential public health care, basic sanitation, and safe electricity among other assistance services. Face the recent COVID-19 pandemic, what are the main emergency challenges faced by Brazilian favelas?

The favelas located in the state of Rio de Janeiro add up to more deaths from COVID-19 than 15 states in Brazil, with 2014 cases and 420 deaths.[3] However, due to the lack of tests and correct diagnoses, the number of infected individuals and deaths caused by the coronavirus in Brazilian favelas is much higher than that has shown; in addition, many deaths are being considered with undetermined cause. Moreover, due to the divergencies between data released by different levels of the government, the underreporting cases in favelas are one of the main challenges to combat the pandemic and contribute to mask the sad reality faced by favelas.

On February 6, 2020, Brazil decreed the law (Nº 13.979) that provides measures to face the outbreak of COVID-19, aiming mainly the isolation between sick and infected individuals.[4] However, the health-care conducts based on the physical isolation are basically impracticable in favelas, where normally five or more people living in a same small house, sharing small spaces including the same bathroom. Moreover, to guarantee the family supported, Brazil’s favela residents probably will continue leaving their homes to work, contributing to the increase in the cases of “community transmission.” In addition, a recent survey realized in 269 Brazilian favelas showed that eight of every ten favela residents need to leave their neighborhoods to get supplies, such as food, medicine, and hygiene articles,[5] which could potentialize the COVID-19 transmission.

In the current pandemic scenario, Brazilian public policies to combat COVID-19 are insufficient and do not reach the individuals that living in favelas, making them a vulnerable group. Thus, the government should create policies more specific to the favelas, taking in an account the peculiarities of the poor living conditions of these people, such as offering a wide access to water, food, medicine, hygiene products (alcohol for aseptic hands), and masks, assuring basic conditions to deal with COVID-19 pandemic. Face the inefficient government assistance, many Brazilian favelas have dealt with the recent pandemic through the help of humanitarian and solidarity actions from nongovernmental movements.

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Conflicts of interest
There are no conflicts of interest.

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Sir,

Suboptimal adherence to infection control measures among health-care workers (HCWs) is one of the major risk factors for acquiring the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). An online cross-sectional survey among HCWs, including physicians, nurses, and technicians working in various hospitals in India with the aim to identify gaps in knowledge, attitude, and practices. A self-administered, pre-tested questionnaire consisting of 30 questions on demographic characteristics, sources of COVID-19 information and knowledge, attitude and practices and an open-ended question regarding COVID was designed and, after a pilot study, sent to different participants as a Google form. Among the 546 respondents, poor knowledge was apparent in 12.1% of respondents regarding the disposal of the dead body of COVID-19 patient, screening tests and recommendations for preventing infection to HCWs. However, KAP surveys should be conducted at regular intervals. Tailored, periodic infection prevention and control programs, and majority agreed that proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE) is important to participate in infection and the use of masks and surface disinfection. About 97.8% of respondents agreed that it is important to participate in infection prevention and control measures to deal with the public health emergency of international importance resulting from the coronavirus responsible for the 2019 outbreak.

The success of these training programs can be measured by doing KAP analysis of healthcare workers. Generating such data at this critical point will help in identifying gaps and strengthening training programs. Apart from training in healthcare facilities based on these survey results, substantial efforts to train HCWs on infection control measures will improve the infection control practices. Apart from training in healthcare facilities based on these survey results, valuable inputs like patient relative education, telemedicine, and strengthening public health laboratories at district levels can prevent infection. Regarding practices, only 46.2% made standard operating protocols regarding for their departments. In visitor policy, changing the teaching pattern of medical students, and strengthening public health laboratories at district levels can prevent infection. Regarding practices, only 46.2% made standard operating protocols regarding for their departments. In visitor policy, changing the teaching pattern of medical students, and strengthening public health laboratories at district levels can prevent infection.

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