

Letter to Editor
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COVID 19: From Facts to Science. A Needed Reflection

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To the Editor

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought the world many challenges, lessons learnt and many unresolved queries. In the ever-changing environment of this worldwide epidemic we have confronted a rapidly evolving environment that has modified our understanding of the virus transmission, clinical presentation and treatment. Clinicians have witnessed the lack of consistency in the data, and official reports and recommendations have been continuously changing reaching levels of uncertainty and provoking a feeling of unrest as the accuracy and validity of such processes have been questioned. From the bedside, we have also experienced the lack of rapidly available data analytics able to support clinical decisions. In this unprecedented scenario the lack of accurate and timely information in our healthcare documentation system has become a major obstacle. A call for the evolution and modernization of healthcare is certainly required.

One of the issues that require further analysis is the effects of the globalization, blamed as a factor for the lack of medical supplies and protective equipment. The dependence on foreign supplies and the surge on prices of some equipment have made some nations to redefine trading and manufacturing regulations and ordinances to guarantee essential materials to be locally produced. At the same time, we have witnessed with perplexity the overwhelming volume of information, medical opinions transmitted through social media without a peer review process and the continuous variation in protocols and treatments that have flooded our emails, phones or media pages. Publications with very small number of patients and dubious scientific methods, have filled journals. Therapeutic regimens have varied, from anti-inflammatories to ventilators, moved by evolving evidence or interests and occasionally leading to rejecting their use out of possible harmful consequences [1,2].

The use of personal protective equipment and social distancing represent the best control method, as it was discovered over a century ago [3]. Society now is looking for new answers in the fight against this and future pandemics. Technology has been looked at as the solution for tracing population mobility, clinical analytics and accurate epidemiologic data among others [4].

Digital technology and artificial intelligence are needed. Telemedicine has been a pioneer of this change. With a growing exposure and acceptance, telemedicine has been instrumental in the delivery of care not only for COVID affected patients but also as an adjunct in the treatment of many patient with different conditions that were excluded from the hospital or clinics by a variety of reasons. In a more advance fashion, artificial intelligence, added to our actual systems or as a new development, could be of extreme help for analytics and data trends and might unveil disease behavior and evolution promoting treatment options in a more agile way.

Healthcare needs evolution to be able to cope with this new and changing environment. We need accurate and timely accessible patient information, with live updates and the ability to process and apply minimal or major changes to both the analytics and the action plan. Digital transformation must include that open and secure access to patient information while facilitating analysis and planning of healthcare accordingly. We believe the healthcare is in need of a major digital transformation, implementing and adapting artificial intelligence, as a way to improve patient safety and the delivery of care [5].

Disclosures

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