

# PREFACE

## **The Roles of Primary Care Services in the Midst of Covid-19 Pandemics**

It is generally understood that the majority of health problems could be solved in primary care settings. Pandemics due to Covid-19 brings about more complexities in primary care services. Health care workers should protect themselves by minimizing physical contacts with patients and coworkers. A frequent option now is teleconsultation or remote consultation, typically using internet. Teleconsultation is asynchronous or synchronous consultation using information and communication technology, mainly for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes.

Patients with stable chronic conditions don't have to visit primary care clinics, but supplies of necessary medications should be accessible to them, to prevent the deterioration of their conditions. Some patients with acute conditions may need medical or nursing interventions provided in the clinics. They should be protected from those potentially spread infections. Screening for visitors to primary care clinics is mandatory and should be done carefully, based on clinical and epidemiological considerations. Those at risk of being infectious should be examined in separate place, preferably an open space. Physical distancing and wearing masks are preventive

measures which should be strictly implemented for everyone who comes into the clinics.

Primary care providers are at a high risk of being infected by SARS-CoV-2 virus and are potentially overstretched by excessive demands of testing, treating and tracing patients with Covid-19. More than 80% of those infected with SARS-CoV-2 are without or with mild symptoms and therefore could stay in community shelters, and some choose self-isolation at home. Isolations of these Covid-19 patients need supervisions by primary care workers in order to prevent rampant transmissions of the virus. Education, counseling, and mental health support are needed to mitigate anxiety, depression and other negative responses to the spread of Covid-19 and its consequences in community lives.

It is crucial that primary care providers are able to work not only as a team internal to the primary care clinics, but also need to work with a wider collaborative team mandated to deal with the prevention and management of Covid-19 incidence in the community. As the number of cases and fatalities associated with Covid-19 are increasing, decisive actions are expected from primary care workers and their collaborators to turn around the situations and keep themselves safe from infection.

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