

## COVID-19 As a Public Health Problem, Recent Developments and Public Health Nursing

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### ABSTRACT

The number of coronavirus-caused deaths is increasing and this is turning into a public health problem.

The virus occurred in an open animal market in the People's Republic of China. It infects people and is threatening the whole world. The number of deaths is gradually increasing. Health professionals are making efforts to solve this problem, thus they are at great risk. This situation, which has become a public health problem, lays a new burden on public health nurses.

Such cases have increased in the 21st century and epidemics called SARS, MERS, avian influenza, swine influenza, and finally, COVID-19 have occurred. Governments and healthcare providers should take the necessary precautions and perform their tasks to prevent such outbreaks.

All healthcare professionals, especially public health nurses, should provide training, counseling and preventive healthcare services on COVID-19 for the society.

Governments should take necessary and sufficient measures to prevent the spread of such outbreaks and develop health policies.

**Key words:** Public Health Nursing–COVID-19–Health Professionals–Prevention

### 1 INTRODUCTION

A new type of virus that occurred in China has spread rapidly to neighboring countries and then to the whole world [1]. It was originally named as the Wuhan virus due to its place of emergence. According to the statement made by the World Health Organization, the number of deaths has approached 200,000 and is increasing every day. The number of actual infected people has reached 3 millions, more than 400,000 being severe. More than 6,000 deaths occur every day [2].

The WHO declared pandemic. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), called governments to be prepared for the new type of coronavirus, which emerged in Wuhan, China and has spread to other cities, regions, and countries. The WHO officially announced the name of this new coronavirus as COVID-19 [3].

The disease symptoms are similar to those of pneumonia such as high fever, shortness of breath, cough, and lesions in both lungs. The mortality rate is approximately % 2. But in some countries mortality is about % 10. The virus is transmitted from animal to person and from person to person. The disease is similar to SARS and MERS that were experienced previously [4].

The most effective strategies to prevent the spread of the disease are vaccination, raising awareness, protection, and medication [5].

According to the statements of WHO, currently, there is no vaccine; the development of the vaccine will take 1-3 years and there is no antiviral treatment. For these reasons, for now, the most effective methods are hospitalization, isolation, and security measures [3].

All countries are working on traditional treatment methods, implement antiviral treatments, and conducting vaccination studies, as well [6]. The spread of this disease in China and then to many countries makes the virus a public health problem. The concept of protective and preventive health, which is one of the basic principles of public health nursing, is of greater importance with the emergence

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of these next-generation diseases.

## 2 WHY IS IT A PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM?

Communicable diseases have an important place due to the damage both to the individual and society. In the globalizing world, people cross borders and interact with other societies. Therefore, a disease that emerges anywhere in the world can spread all over the world. People can travel long distances in a short time by transportation facilities. A virus or bacteria in the individual can be carried during this travel. An infectious disease of a human can spread very easily due to being a social entity and becomes a general public health problem [7]. COVID-19, transmitted from animal to person and then from person to person, affects all societies and protective measures become more prominent.

## 3 RESPONSIBILITIES OF PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE REGARDING COVID-19 AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the definition by the World Health Organization, public health nursing is a special branch under nursing that works to increase health within the health program of the whole society, improve the physical and social environment, protect the society from diseases and injuries and that includes all nursing skills and some phases of public health and social assistance [8].

Public health nurses face individuals in different roles and in different fields as they work in various working areas (with healthy individuals) such as home, school, workplace, and dispensary [8]. While working in these areas, they should provide training and counseling services on COVID-19.

Environmental arrangements should be made for COVID-19 by conducting studies to eliminate the factors that impair health by checking the physical, biological and social environment.

Training and counseling should be provided to individuals and families on COVID-19, avoiding direct contact with animals, hand hygiene, and precautions during travel.

Explanations such as warnings by the WHO and uncertainty about the course of the disease should be taken into consideration and it is necessary to make cooperation to take precautions.

The criterion in the evaluation of public health nursing functions developed in line with new roles and responsibilities is not the healing patient who is given care, but the ratio of risk groups benefiting from this care, improvements in the public health level, and changes in health-related behaviors of individuals.

Governments should be able to develop effective health policies against new infectious diseases.

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