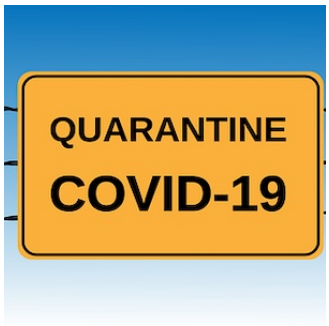
ICU
MANAGEMENT & PRACTICE

COVID-19: Quarantine Measures, Laws and Limits



COVID-19 continues to spread, and governments across the globe have imposed quarantines and travel bans. China locked down its cities, Italy imposed restrictions throughout the country, and the US and Canada have enforced self-quarantine. The US has banned the entry of travellers from China, Iran, and most of Europe, while many other countries have implemented heavy screening protocols. However, despite these quarantine measures and laws, the number of COVID-19 cases continues to increase.

Quarantines and travel bans are usually the first response when a new infectious disease outbreak occurs. But the question is: with a virus-like COVID-19, is this sufficient? If a disease is highly transmissible, can these measures help? Especially if they are imposed or implemented in a haphazard manner?

Typically, when we say quarantine, it refers to the separation of people or communities who have been explored to an infectious disease while isolation refers to the separation of people who are known to be infected. But in some countries, such as the US, quarantine refers to both types of interventions and also includes travel bans.

Quarantine measures are definitely needed to contain COVID-19, but what else can be done to flatten the curve? Are there any other, more constructive tools that can be used? As far as COVID-19 is concerned, slowing its spread is the priority. ICUs and emergency departments cannot sustain the continuous influx of patients. That is why it is being advised that patients who have mild symptoms should stay home. Workers should telecommute wherever possible. But will social distancing and self-isolation be sufficient to slow down the spread?

What more could be done? This is an important question. This recent outbreak has highlighted the need for better measures, improved laws and new tools that could help us better handle a pandemic like COVID-19.

Source: NEJM
Image Credit: PIxabay

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