

PRESS RELEASE

Pakistan Islamic Medical Association (PIMA)

April 25, 2020

Speakers:

- Prof. Muhammad Iqbal Khan; Vice Chancellor Shifa Tameer e Millat University
- Prof. Muhammad Umar; Vice Chancellor Rawalpindi Medical University
- Dr. Iftikhar Burney; President Pakistan Islamic Medical Association Islamabad
- Brig[®] Asif Nawaz, President PIMA Rawalpindi
- Prof Muhammad Ijaz Khan; President Pakistan Society of Infectious Diseases
- Dr. Saeedullah Shah, Consultant Cardiologist, Ex-president PIMA Islamabad

The Physicians and representatives from Pakistan Islamic Medical Association and other doctor's bodies express deep concerns over the current COVID -19 situation in the country and on the measures taken by government on relaxing the lockdown especially in time when it is most needed.

Situation at present:

- Week wise data suggests an exponential increase in number of patients. We have seen a rapid increase in numbers in just 5 days (8,275 on April 20, to 11,155 on April 24,): An increase of 2,880 patients.
- Myths so far have made the situation worse than we think. "It will not affect us, we are the chosen ones and we do not have severe cases as compare to other parts of the world"
- The reality is that we are better off primarily because of the lockdown since early days, even though it could have been better.
- At present, the number of patients in the intensive care and isolation wads in different hospitals is increasing rapidly across the country and in many places the number has increased to more than 80%.
- The situation we fear in the comings days is that of refusal to admit patients because of no beds or GOD forbid, choosing which patient to ventilate and which to let die.
- In fact, severity is much more than we think of. The healthcare workers (HCW) have themselves fallen ill due to COVID itself. More than 162 HCW have been tested positive in the country. Many more others have been sidelined because of quarantine. This rapid reduction in manpower needed to combat the storm will add on to the grave problem we are facing right now.
- We neither have any cure at present nor capacity to fight this disease. The only way to save lives is to slowdown the number of cases by implementing social distancing and strict lockdown for the next few weeks.

PIMA and doctors' community demands:

1. Strict enforcement of lockdown and prevention of congregations of all sorts to contain the rapid spread of COVID – 19. The government should take this responsibility.

2. The public should cooperate by keeping in doors
3. The business community should bear the hardship for few more weeks by closing departmental stores, shops and shopping centers except those of basic necessities. Alternative modes of business should be explored and used
4. The society especially charitable organizations and NGO should take lead in ensuring the provision of basic necessities especially food to those in need. Ramadan is the month of giving and INFAQ. We are sure that by looking after each other, nobody will remain hungry.
5. Religious scholars from all sects to please understand that saving lives is of foremost importance in this epidemic. They should endorse the need to keep common people away from aggregation in mosques. The different innovations suggested are unlikely to be followed by majority: even if sick and old avoid mixing in the mosque, the healthier and young may bring the virus home and infect others. Almost all the Islamic countries have closed the mosques including Haramain, for the time being. Taraweeh can be offered at home, similarly it is strongly needed to continue with the limitation of regular prayers and jumma by the mosque staff only.

We need support of government, scholars, business community, philanthropists, and public to fight this together. We pray Allah SWT for His Mercy and giving us strength and resources to carry on till it is required.