Infodemic Management in Iran: A Necessity to Control and response to COVID-19

İran'da İnfodemik Yönetim: COVID-19'a Kontrol ve Müdahale Gerekliliği

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ABSTRACT

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak has spread from Wuhan, China in December 2019. The world will be accompanied by a tsunami of information. Therefore, it can be stated that we have been encountered "infodemic" through the Covid-19 global crisis. *"We're not just fighting an epidemic; we're fighting an infodemic"*, said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. COVID-19 epidemic has been spreaded in Iran, in February 2020. According to a general classifications, the *Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MoHME)* of Iran actions to manage infodemic presented in five major domains; a) Releasing guidelines and protocol; b) Launching systems, websites and applications; c) Allocation of call center; d) Educational program on national TV and the Media; e) Establishment of different national campaigns. In order to have effective infodemic management, two phases are recommended; 1) Disseminate accurate and timely information through official channels and resources. 2) Educate the necessary skills to the information stakeholders. These skills include information literacy, media literacy, and health literacy.

Key Words: COVID-19, Misinformation, Infodemic

ÖZET

Koronavirüs hastalığı (COVID-19) salgını, Aralık 2019'da Çin'in Wuhan kentinden yayıldı. Dünyaya bir bilgi tsunamisi eşlik edecek. Dolayısıyla Covid-19 küresel krizi ile "infodemik" ile karşılaştığımız söylenebilir. "Sadece bir salgınla savaşmıyoruz; Dünya Sağlık Örgütü Genel Direktörü Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, bir infodemic ile savaşıyoruz "dedi. COVID-19 salgını Şubat 2020'de İran'da yayıldı. Genel bir sınıflandırmaya göre, İran Sağlık ve Tıp Eğitimi Bakanlığı'nın (MoHME) infodemiyi yönetme eylemleri beş ana alanda sunuldu; a) Yayınlama kuralları ve protokolü; b) Sistemleri, web sitelerini ve uygulamaları başlatmak; c) Çağrı merkezinin tahsisi; d) Ulusal TV ve Medyada eğitim programı; e) Farklı ulusal kampanyaların oluşturulması. Etkili bir infodemik yönetim için iki aşama önerilir; 1) Resmi kanallar ve kaynaklar aracılığıyla doğru ve zamanında bilgi yayınlayın. 2) Bilgi paydaşlarına gerekli becerileri öğretin. Bu beceriler arasında bilgi okuryazarlığı, medya okuryazarlığı ve sağlık okuryazarlığı bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: COVID-19, Yanlış Bilgi, Bilgi Teknolojisi

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Dear Editor,

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak has spread from Wuhan, China in December 2019. This outbreak which became a pandemic in January 2020, besides the public health, economic, and socio-psychological issues, has affected international relations as well. Every outbreak of disease will be accompanied by a tsunami of information. Therefore, it can be stated that we have been encountered "infodemic" through the Covid-19 global crisis. "We're not just fighting an epidemic; we're fighting an infodemic", said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus (1). According to WHO report, the COVID-19 infodemic is discussed in four major subjects a) the cause and origin of the virus and disease; b) its symptoms and transmission patterns; c) prophylactics and cures; and d) the effectiveness and impact of interventions by health authorities or other institutions (2).

COVID-19 epidemic has been spread in Iran, in February 2020. According to a general classifications, the Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MoHME) of Iran actions to manage infodemic presented in five major domains; a)

Releasing guidelines and protocol; b) Launching systems, websites and applications; c) Allocation of call center; d) Educational program on national TV and the Media; e) Establishment of different national campaigns. It should be noted that to manage the infodemic COVID-19 the MoHME plays it's informing mission chiefly through the Ministry of Health news site, mass media especially Khabar channel on national TV, university websites and sub-sectors, and national social media (3).

Beside the above activities, one of the outstanding actions done by information specialists to manage infodemic is ISC COVID-19 Visualizer platform. From the early days, this system was introduced by the Islamic World Science Citation Center (ISC) with the aim of accelerating the informing process of new scientific findings of COVID-19 and the related statistics of diseases' spreading based on the world map. Statistical analysis of daily confirmed cases to COVID-19 in Iran indicate the decreasing growth rate of COVID-19 on April while, the average daily growth rate of infection increased from May to now (Figure 1), so Iran has experienced the second wave (4).
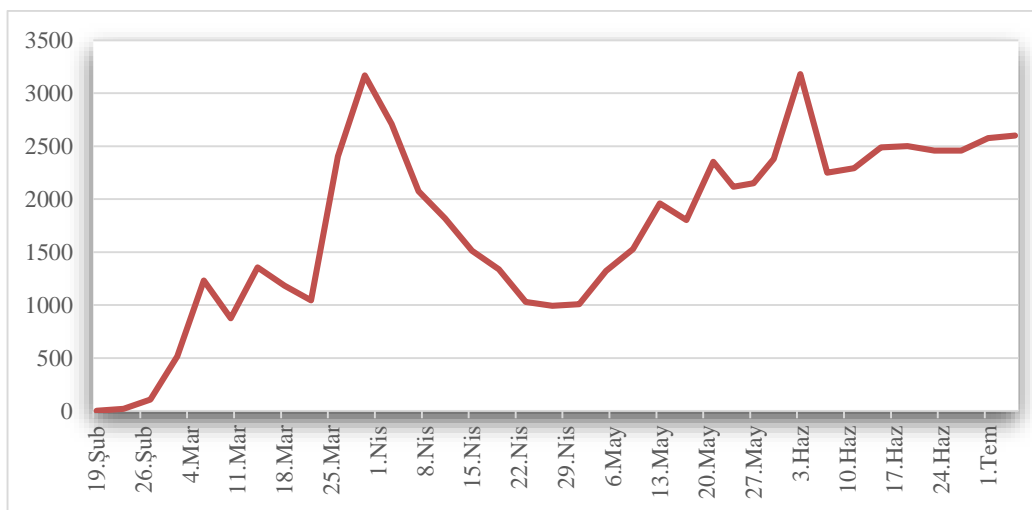

Figure 1. Number of New Confirmed Cases Due to COVID-19 in Iran.

It should be noted, due to being unknown the virus and changes in the symptoms of patients over the time, fundamental changes in guidelines and protocols applied for public, which led to exacerbate infodemic. In order to have effective infodemic management, two phases are recommended:

- In the first phase, through spreading relevant and timely information via official channels and sources, the correct information will overcome the misinformation· As Bryan Vartabedian, a physicians, said: "*dilution is the solution to pollution*"(5).
- In the second phase, due to the continuation of COVID-19 prevalence, in account to maintain the effects of the accomplished actions and permanent effects, after providing valid information, in order to access to them the necessary educating should be done. In the meantime, librarians, due to their knowledge of information typology, information dissemination, and their mission in informing, are able to work in different working groups, especially in informing segments, and educate necessary skills to information stakeholders, such as infected people and their family, specialist and researchers. These skills include information literacy, media literacy, and health literacy (6).

Finally, this process of informing and educating people must be done continuously, changes people's lifestyles and institutionalize in their behavioral habits, because we will be a host to this uninvited guest.

Conflict of interest
No conflict of interest was declared by the authors.

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