

JBIMA Editorial

Dr Sharif Kaf Al-Ghazal, *Editor in Chief*

Assalamo Alaikom

Everyone is aware of the elephant in the room, there's currently nothing else worthy of discussion; the COVID-19 pandemic. It has resulted in states being locked down, cities being quarantined and the closing of borders. The streets are empty as people remain indoors in their homes. Even Masjid al Haram in Makkah is closed. Before we really discuss this we need to understand that this pandemic is pre-destined by Allah swt. Allah says in the Quran:

“And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient” (2:155).

So how do we respond to a calamity? Allah tells us immediately in the next verse:

“Who, when disaster strikes them, say, ‘Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return’” (2:156).

A Muslim is patient in trials; he knows Allah will never forsake him, nor will Allah burden him with a trial that is more than what he can handle.

Over the last few weeks, life has drastically changed around the world. The coronavirus outbreak is not just an epidemic, it's also a global pandemic. People everywhere are being asked to stay home and stay away from others in order to reduce the risk of infection.

COVID-19 has brought with it a wave of negative outcomes, terrible illness and death, but it also highlighted some important life lessons.

We should be willing to temporarily trade some of our freedom for the greater good of the public. There's no doubt that it has been difficult staying home. Many people are complaining about feeling bored. Some might even feel that it's a breach of their individual right, being made to stay home. However, when it comes to the greater good, one should always be willing to sacrifice a little bit of that freedom. A balance between individual rights and public safety is an ever-changing thing. When not at work, we should remain at home.

Staying at home isn't necessarily solitary isolation, it offers us the chance to reconnect with family and spend time with them. As healthcare practitioners, we lead busy lives and can work unsociable hours so this is an opportunity worth maximizing. Self-isolation can give us an opportunity to strengthen our relationship with Allah and reflect on our actions and get closer to Him. Ramadan has now arrived, so now is the perfect time to ask Allah (swt) for forgiveness and ask his mercy.

We need to learn how to be content alone. It's hard for some people to just be still and do nothing. Social distancing can be very difficult, but it can also teach us a lot about ourselves. We need to learn how to keep ourselves busy. Time alone cannot simply be spent watching TV and we have to try doing something else. Our body and mind is our ultimate home and Amanah entrusted to us by Allah (swt); we have to learn how to love it and live with it.

Even as doctors, we need answers to the new challenges we are facing with this pandemic, whether in terms of prevention or treatment. Allah hasn't created a disease without a cure; we have been asked to search for the treatment of diseases as the prophet says in the hadith:

“O people! Be treated. For, there is no disease that Allah has created, except that He also has created its treatment.”

We also need to battle a variety of ethical challenges including the shortage of medical resources, triaging patients when ICU beds are limited and improving end of life and palliative care. The former two are novel struggles and are not simple to deal with. But during a pandemic as merciless and vicious as COVID-19, time is of the essence.

During this time, we should acknowledge what different teams in BIMA have been doing in leading a variety of community projects during this crisis. This includes providing medical guidelines to the public on COVID-19, webinars on the pandemic, liaising with scholars with regards to the suspension of congregational prayers in mosques as well as medical guidelines on ghusl and burial. Moreover, BIMA has been involved in supporting groups

working on mental health issues as well as providing guidelines on end of life scenarios and bereavements during this pandemic. We have also been involved in weekly online briefings coordinated by the Muslim Council of Britain on areas in which there is a gap in the community. Furthermore, volunteers from BIMA have also been planning and hosting online training for medical students who would like to join the frontline response. I would like to convey my thanks to team BIMA who have gone above and beyond in giving up their time to help run so many activities for the organization. The BIMA family is resilient and it has been heartwarming to see everyone rise to the occasion.

Pandemics are not new, the plague of Amawas took place during the time of the second caliph Omar ibn Al Khattab and killed tens of thousands in the Levant (including many of the companions of the prophet PBUH). A few major waves of this plague took place again during the Umayyad caliphate and hit different areas in Iraq and Syria but did not affect the advancement and progression of the state. The people followed the guidelines set by the prophet PBUH, one of which includes a hadith on not going to a land with a pandemic within it and this equates to modern day stay at home guidelines. The prophet Mohammed PBUH spoke about plagues more than 1,400 years ago and said ***“If you hear of a plague in a land, then do not go into it. If it happens in a land where you are, then do not go out of it”***. This is great modern principle of public health to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

We pray that this crisis makes us even more resilient and that we bounce back stronger. Those who have given up their time, and have also risked their health in the war against COVID-19 deserve our utmost thanks and respect. Our colleagues in the NHS continue to go above and beyond; you are true heroes.

I would like to take the opportunity to pay tribute to all healthcare practitioners, who have lost their lives during COVID-19 and were working on the frontline. I would also like to offer particular condolences to the families of our fellow Muslim doctors who have passed away and we have their obituaries within the letter to editor section of this journal, including all their names. May Allah bless their souls and grant them paradise.

It would be appropriate to end by quoting another hadith of the prophet PBUH about being positive and patient when you are affected by any calamity. He said ***“wondrous is the affair of the believer for there is good for him in every matter and this is not the case with anyone except the believer. If he is happy, then he thanks Allah and thus there is good for him, and if he is harmed, then he shows patience and thus there is good for him”***. As doctors, as long as we take precautions and use all the required protection during this pandemic, we believe in the qadar of Allah. We remember the hadith of the prophet PBUH

on this issue in which he says: ***“Know that if the nations gathered together to benefit you, they will not benefit you unless Allah has decreed it for you. And if the nations gathered together to harm you, they will not harm you unless Allah has decreed it for you.”***

Although the doors of cafes, restaurants, shops and even mosques may be closed, the doors to Allah’s mercy are not so we need to take the opportunity of the blessed month of Ramadan to make Duaa asking Allah His forgiveness and guidance and above all to ease the calamity of this disease.

Very best wishes,

Wassalam.

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