

COVID-19 stigmatization: A devil and a deep blue sea

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Dear Editor,

COVID-19, is an on-going pandemic that started as an outbreak in December 2019, in Wuhan City, China¹. The outbreak was epidemiologically linked to a wet animal whole sale market in Wuhan City, China¹. As at 22 April 2020, almost 2.5 million cases of COVID-19 had been reported with more than 160000 deaths, worldwide². Also, as of this same day (22 April 2020), the US has been the epicentre of COVID-19 with 828441 cases recorded and 46379 associated deaths³.

So far, there have been serious global concerns about issues of stigmatization associated with COVID-19^{4,5}. According to a recent news report on COVID-19, some Africans residing in Guangzhou, China, were stigmatized because they were presumed to be COVID-19 infectors⁴. COVID-19 in itself is not a death sentence, but a viral infection that has the potential of causing life-threatening conditions⁶. However, due to fear, bias, and/or ignorance, people tend to stigmatize people suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19⁴.

COVID-19 stigmatization is a global issue that requires public health attention⁷. This is so because such stigmatization can drive people to hide the illness due to fears of being discriminated against; preventing them to seek medical care early or discouraging them from adopting healthy behaviours⁷. Hence, COVID-19 stigmatization may also directly or indirectly increase the spread of the disease.

So that the protection and safety of people infected with COVID-19 can be assured, policymakers of each nation should also take into account measures to protect patients from stigmatization.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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