

COVID-19 Pandemic: An analysis of what is working, what we have learned thus far, and the challenges that remain ahead

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The COVID-19 pandemic started globally with the first cases being reported as early as December 1, 2019 in Wuhan, China.¹ The first US cases were reported January 20, 2020.² To date we have 11,892,382 confirmed cases globally and 545,485 deaths.³ Ominously, as of July 2020, the number of cases continues to rise with the United States having the highest cases (3,016,515) and mortality rates in the world. The COVID-19 pandemic has presented unique challenges for emergency managers since most professionals have not experienced or managed a global pandemic. Complicating things further is the nature of SARS CoV-2 itself. As a novel virus we are still learning about the virus which requires adaptive changes to our current response as the pandemic evolves. The pandemic affects all of our lives, no aspect of society remains unaffected. This has profound implications for emergency management (EM) as a discipline. From a research perspective it provides an opportunity to examine what has occurred in the field, what has worked and where the gaps are that we can learn from to improve future responses. It is generally recognized that the United States leadership at the political level has failed in the pandemic response.⁴ One aspect of emergency management that requires urgent discussion and research is the role of crisis leadership in successfully managing a pandemic event. Never before has it been more clear that EM professionals need to be in charge to handle

disasters and political leaders provide the necessary support to help reduce barriers in the response, rather than what we have seen with policy flip-flops, confusing messaging, and outright distortions of both the truth and reality. Pandemic response and preparations for future emergencies must be evidence based supported by empirical research. This requires both an interdisciplinary and a multidisciplinary approach to emergency management going forward.⁴ The global community faces synchronous events such as the current COVID-19 response and recent events such as Cyclone Amphan are sure to continue to test response capabilities.⁵ Colorado State University recently updated its hurricane forecast calling for a very active 2020 season. This will require out of the box thinking when it comes to preparedness and response especially in places like Florida and Texas where COVID rates are rising daily.⁶ Since we published the call for papers for the COVID-19 issue we have been receiving papers on a diverse set of topics ranging from research briefs, reports from the field, and empirical research. The first paper in our special issue by Afkhamighda & Elwakhil is a predictive modeling paper that looks at COVID-19 spread in the construction industry. We would like to acknowledge our authors who have submitted to this special issue and our reviewers. In order to provide the EM community with the most up to date and relevant information we have been accelerating our peer-reviewed

process to get important scientific manuscripts posted on-line within 5-7 days after receipt. Our goal is to continue to provide the information as fast as the peer review and editing process can be completed to ensure our readers that the information is both reliable and timely. We encourage continued submission of original research that have both an empirical contribution to the literature and also have a practical value for emergency management practitioners.

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