

## PREPAREDNESS FOR PANDEMIC COVID-19: LESSON LEARNT

To the editor:

We would like to share ideas and experience on “Getting ready for the next pandemic COVID-19: Why we need to be more prepared and less scared.”<sup>1</sup> The conclusion that “We as emergency managers need to gain the public’s trust and reassure them that we will get through COVID-19”<sup>1</sup> is interesting. In our country where the disease outbreak is ongoing, there are several problems with preparedness and management. Here, the disease was imported early in January 2020 and we became the second country that the disease emerged in.<sup>2</sup> At first, there were several policies, such as control of immigration and population movement within the country for fighting against COVID-19. Despite strict immigration control, without refusal of travelers from risk countries and no complete blockage of international transportation, diseases are still continuously imported. Since the disease is new, some local medical experts might underestimate the seriousness of the disease and give inappropriate recommendations in disease containment. This resulted in unfavorable disease control in the first period. After the first period of outbreak, the reappraisal of the policies and change to new policies, blockage of international transportation with permission for only returning travelers and intranational control of population migration by implementation of curfew, there was the success in control of imported COVID-19.

An unexpected event, the lack of sufficient face

masks, occurred and medical personnel, especially emergency medical workers had to take high risks in daily practice. Indeed, the good education of the local people is very important, and it is necessary to reassure that we have the exact expert to provide knowledge and plan for disease control. According to suggestions from lesson learnt from China, the regulation of medical supplies becomes a very important issue but is usually forgotten.<sup>3</sup> The situation with lack of protective apparatus for medical personnel will not occur if we have good public health planning and emergency management for coming disease outbreaks. The urgent response to the insufficient amount of protective devices by governmental regulations and control on production and distribution of protective devices could help decrease the seriousness of the problem.

Regarding the emergency management team, the planning for proper distribution of protective devices was set. Adaptation of the local facilities and use of locally available industries such as handmade face mask production became the method that the local emergency manager used to counteract the outbreak of disease. The first peak of the disease outbreak was successfully controlled in the fourth month of occurrence of disease with the mentioned policies. The collaboration between local people, the private sector, and governmental organization resulted in dramatic success of disease control. We should “put the right man to the right job with the right method” then we can expect successful disease management because there will be no problem in the management system.

Regarding lessons learnt, which can be applied

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for other settings with the problem of uncontrollable COVID-19 outbreaks, we can confirm the importance of public's trust and reassurance.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, we can also find these important key success issues: a) collaboration between all parties in the community during crisis, b) rethinking, reanalysis, and reusing locally available facilities to correspond to the problem in the situation of several limitations, c) emergency management is a way of trial since no one knows what is the best solution but one can use the "plan-do-check-act" cycle concept for readjustment to the policies to achieve success, d) strict regulations are needed for emergency management, this might mean some degree of reduced freedom in daily life of local people, and e) hope is the basic requirement for emergency management in any crisis situation.

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