

COVID-19 and the Measures to Sustain the Availability of Dexamethasone as well as other Pharmaceuticals in the Community Pharmacies of Pakistan

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Dear Editor,

This correspondence signifies the need of effective legal measures to be taken for the sales and distribution of drugs related to their therapeutic benefits versus SARS-CoV-2. After the pandemic COVID-19, Pharmaceutical scientists were striving hard to find some remedy to prevent, mitigate or cure the disease COVID-19. There have been started clinical studies/trials across the globe to find the cure of COVID-19 through medication herbs or immunization. Billions of dollars have been spent on the related research so far and world has now started seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. Dexamethasone has been declared as a lifesaving drug in critical ill patients of COVID-19 by the government of UK [1]. Dexamethasone, a molecule easily available in almost every corner of the world. It has been a molecule of easy access and cheap price in Pakistan. Unfortunately there have been many flaws in the check and balance at the community pharmacies of Pakistan as the most of the pharmacies required are not being run with the presence of a qualified person(s). There have been routines of malpractices of shortage of drugs with the increasing demands for the purpose of extra profit motives. Same is expected to be happening with the easily available dexamethasone and other pharmaceuticals after getting the tag of life saving molecule in the COVID-19. There have been overnight artificial shortage evidences in vicinities of all major hospitals of the country [2]. Such practices often happen due to poor control of drug inspectors over the pharmacies allowing the non-qualified retailers to supervise the drug sales without presence and effective supervision of the Qualified Pharmacist(s). The current scenario of Pakistan when

the total number of COVID-19 patients has surpassed 175,000 and more than 3500 deaths till 21 June 2020 [3], there can be much irreparable losses due to expected rise in false prices as well as shortage of various brands of dexamethasone and other pharmaceuticals needful in COVID-19. Therefore the author suggests the followings to sustain the availability of Dexamethasone etc in the Community Pharmacies of Pakistan.

- 1- To strictly direct Pharmacies to follow drug laws and not dispense all the prescription drugs including Dexamethasone without the prescription of a registered medical practitioner to prevent the misuse of the these medicines.
- 2- Effective implementation of existing rules of drug sales and distribution particularly ensuring the full compliance of availability of qualified persons in the Pharmacies.
- 3- Effective surveillance of the sales record of the dexamethasone and other related pharmaceuticals on the stock registers. Hence Drug Inspectors can easily check the available balance of these by subtracting the available drug from the total stock received on the Pharmacies.
- 4- Monitoring the price control as per law and taking the necessary actions on non- compliance.
- 5- Directing the Volunteer Tiger Force to inform the drug inspectors for any violation of the drug rules in the sales of dexamethasone etc and Tiger Force to follow the complaints for effective redressal through federal or provincial drug inspectors/drug controllers.

REFERENCES

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