Editorial

Theo Gavrielides

Introduction

Welcome to the fifth issue of 2021! Continuing to learn about COVID-19 and its multiple impacts is a key objective of our Journal. We aim to support the international community by publishing high quality, evidence-based papers on what works. We also want to expose bad practices while giving a voice to under-represented groups. That is why I was thrilled to publish a special issue titled Human rights in health care during COVID-19 and other pandemics. It was an honor to work alongside the Guest Editors Jan Michael Alexandre C Bernadas (De La Salle University Manila) and Lee E-dson P Yarcia (Alliance for Improving Health Outcomes) to prepare this timely edition.

The work continues and the need for evidence on human rights in health and social care is increasing. This should explain why our readership but also the number of submissions have increased considerably. I want to thank the authors who entrust us with our work, as well as the editorial team and Board.

Turning to this issue, our first two papers are from Greece, my country of origin. Greece has gone through some really difficult times both before and during the pandemic with some of the highest rates of unemployment and poverty in Europe. "HIV patient access to healthcare services in post-austerity era in Greece" brings much needed evidence and an overdue debate that I hope will help move things forward. The economic crisis combined with COVID-19 has had a major impact on patient access to health-care services and resulted in an increase in unmet population health needs. Focusing on HIV patients, this cross-sectional study was carried out between February and April 2019 to assess barriers in access to HIV. A total of 329 HIV-positive individuals participated in the study. Out of the total respondents, 37.40% reported obstacles in accessing HIV care over the past year. A total of 24.30% reported they were not tested for viral load in the past six months and received a result. Individuals, who self-evaluate their financial status as very bad or bad, were more likely to be unaware of their viral load (55.60%) than those with better financial status (33.5%) ($p < 0.01$). This study attempts to fill the research gap regarding the impact of one of the severest economic crises during the past century with complex social extensions, in one of the most vulnerable patient groups.

Moving onto "Dialysis and medical tourism. Investigating patients' perceptions in Greece" it explores the possibilities and the growth prospects of medical tourism in Greece, while particularly focusing on the dialysis process. The paper is based on original research with 193 kidney disease patients that underwent extra-renal dialysis in two public and three private artificial kidney units in Thessaloniki. The study population consists of patients with end-stage chronic renal failure that undergo dialysis. One of the most obvious results is that patients on dialysis treatment have limited both the frequency and the duration of their vacation. The 8.3% of patients that did not use to travel increased to 37.8%, whereas only 22.3% continue to travel 2–4 times a year. Patients that keep on going on vacation frequently claim that a break from the daily routine improves their quality of life. Most of the participants (up to 36.3%) claim they feel healthier while 34.2% stated they experience a normal life when they escape their everyday life and travel far from home. The 69.9% claim that Greece has the potentials to be a popular medical tourism destination. However, a well-structured and government-financed assistance program is absent.

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“Unmet Dental Care Need in West of Iran: Determinants and Inequality” assess the self-perceived need, seeking and use of dental care and its main determinants in Kurdistan province. A total of 1,056 adults in Kurdistan province were included in this cross-sectional study. Multistage sampling approach was used to select the samples. The paper points out that unmet dental care need was 62.7%. The most important reasons for unmet dental care need were “Could not afford the cost” and “Insurance did not cover the costs.” The result of the concentration index revealed that seeking dental care was more concentrated among the rich, whereas the perceived dental care need is more prevalent among the poor.

Moving on to “Human rights education in palliative care – an evaluation of a national training program” it evaluated 1,402 people who attended human rights training in palliative care in the UK. In total, 480 completed pre- and post-training questionnaires (146 completed the questionnaire at six months), with 86 completing a questionnaire at all three data collection points. The results are interesting for those wishing to do similar initiatives in their own countries or organizations. Findings show increased levels of self-reported knowledge and confidence at two weeks and six months post-training. Implementing human rights in the workplace is complex. Difficulties maintaining knowledge and keeping up to date with changes in legislation and traditional ways of working were cited as barriers to service users’ human rights.

“Assessing unmet health-care needs of the elderly in the west of Iran: A case study” looked at the status of perceived need, seeking behavior and utilization of health services in the elderly population of Sanandaj. The researchers conducted a survey with 800 elderly people using multistage sampling and data were collected using self-report questionnaires. The perceived need for outpatient and inpatient health-care services was 69.7% and 29.7%, respectively. Among them, the unmet need for outpatient and inpatient health-care services was 46.6% and 17%, respectively. It is clear from the original findings of this article that the elderly population suffers from unmet health-care needs, especially in outpatient services. The most important reason for not seeking outpatient and inpatient services was financial barriers and self-medication, respectively.

The last paper in our issue “Adverse perinatal outcomes of intimate partner violence during pregnancy” raises once again the societal failure around gender equality. Iran is a developing country with a mosaic of different ethnicities and cultures. It seems that the less developed regions of Iran, such as Kurdistan, are also culturally different from most other regions of Iran. The paper looks at the adverse perinatal outcomes of intimate partner violence (IPV) during pregnancy in Kurdistan. In total, 1,080 pregnant women were categorized into 433 and 647 women, respectively, exposed and unexposed to IPV followed by 48 h post-delivery. The values of incidence rate, relative risk and corresponding 95% confidence interval were calculated for interesting outcomes.

I hope that you find this Issue useful in your practice and research. Your feedback is always welcome; you can submit your views via our website, as well as your work for peer review and publication at www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/journal/ijhrh?id=IJHRH#author-guidelines. We review papers on an ongoing basis and have a target of returning them to the author within 5–8 weeks of receipt. Warm wishes from everyone at the IJHRH and stay safe!