

Peer Review

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cite as: Bhowmik, A. (2020) Peer review of 'Raghuraman A. Covid19 Pandemic - A practical update'. *The Physician* 2020 Vol6: issue1; ePub 14.03.2020 (pre-print v1) DOI: [10.38192/1.6.1.1.p1](https://doi.org/10.38192/1.6.1.1.p1)

This is an excellent synopsis on the currently available knowledge about Covid-19, which has been recognised by the WHO as a pandemic. I have a few comments.

At the time of reading this, it is clear that human-to-human transmission is the primary route of spread of the illness.

“For symptomatic, unconfirmed in-patients meeting the Covid-19 case definition, current guidance is use of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), including, a fluid resistant surgical mask, gloves, apron and eye protection if risk of splashing into the eyes” – it should be made clear that this is the recommendation for the health care professionals looking after these patients, not for the patients themselves.

“Emerging information from these experiences has highlighted factors that could increase the risk of nosocomial transmission, such as delayed implementation of appropriate infection prevention and control measures combined with persistence of coronavirus in the clinical setting” – Some of the information coming from South Korea and Taiwan about infection control measures could help inform actions in the UK. e.g. Wang CJ, Published Online: March 3, 2020. doi:10.1001/jama.2020.3151

“Up to 10% of patients can present initially with gastrointestinal symptoms (e.g. diarrhoea, nausea), which can precede the development of fever and dyspnoea”. However, a report from China published in NEJM, suggests that diarrhoea is uncommon – 3.8% (Guan et al February 28, 2020. doi: 10.1056/NEJMoa2002032)

“C reactive protein (CRP) correlates to disease severity” – The above mentioned study (Guan et al) found that CRP was elevated in most cases of Covid-19, but I am not aware of data that suggests that CRP is correlated with severity. A reference to this would be of interest.

“No antiviral has been proven to be active against COVID-19” – An overview of recent reports suggesting that chloroquine and lopinavir-ritonavir may have clinical efficacy would be useful – if only to confirm whether or not further research is warranted.

I understand that the author may be reluctant to give firm advice regarding the public health aspects of control e.g. whether or not cinemas, theatres, schools etc should continue to remain open. (The decision regarding major football matches has already been taken). However, many readers will still want to know of informed opinion regarding these issues and a comment on the basis of information from other countries would be welcome.