



## Social Distancing in the Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Epidemic: A Threat to Social Health

### Letter to editor:

In accordance with the latest data published by the World Health Organization (WHO), since the first report of COVID-19 cases from Wuhan China to March 8, 2021, more than 116,363,935 confirmed cases of the disease and 2,587,225 death cases were reported in the world. The number of cases of COVID-19 afflictions and deaths in Iran during this period were 1,689,692 and 60,687 respectively (1). COVID-19 can be mainly transmitted through infected respiratory droplets from human to human (2).

In the lack of appropriate medications and studies need to be done on individuals and larger populations to see how much vaccines protect against transmission (3), one of the major strategies to control COVID-19 is Social Distancing (4-6). In communities, people may have been infected and have not yet been diagnosed, and thus they are not isolated; hence, social distancing could prevent the transmission of the disease as much as possible by limiting the movements of the population and decreasing the contact of people within the community (4, 6, 7). Social distancing can lead to a delay in the peak of the disease and lowers the occupation of hospital beds (6, 8). The results of a study in Iran showed that the trend of new case and deaths of patients with COVID-19 was increasing before the implementation social distancing, but it was decreasing after the implementation of the intervention (9). Therefore From the beginning of the occurrence of COVID-19 in Iran, social distancing was implemented as closing schools, universities, gathering centers such as traditional dining-rooms, barbershops, cafes, parks, promenades, gym, cinemas, decreasing the attendance of employees in offices, reducing gatherings in shopping malls, removing unnecessary travels at the national level, etc. All of these are associated with moral constraints, social problems, and economic consequences such as unemployment (5, 10). Therefore, it seems social distancing is a threat to social health.

According to the definition provided by Keyes, social health means a person's reports of the quality of his/her relationship with others (11). The quantity and quality of involvement and interaction with the community to improve the welfare of common units of the society is one of the definitions of social health. The counterpoint of this interaction is the increase in social problems such as unemployment, suicide, class gap (differences), violence against women, divorce, addiction, etc. (12). Simultaneous with the reduction in the COVID-19 cases in China, this country faced a wave of divorces of couples after social distancing. Many users understand the increase in an application for divorce as social distancing and the quarantine of families at home and take into account the event as another disaster after the Corona for China (13). Some users point out the next wave of divorce among Iranians. However, another group of users hopes the opportunity to stay at homes will enliven past loves and gifts for Iranian families (14). Concerns about the risk of domestic violence against women and children in vulnerable families, because of social distancing, are rising. Children's and women's rights activists and the State Welfare Organization (SWO) officials report an increase in calls with social emergency about domestic abuse and express that the number of calls by families has had a significant increase from February 20, 2020, until now (13).

Upgrading social health does not occur without the cooperation of various ministries (12), and its improvement is not merely within the scope of authority or power of the Ministry of Health. Thus, to design a comprehensive action plan, some interventions aimed to improve social health with the solidarity of triple powers (the executive, the legislature and the judiciary) and all military forces, the Welfare Organization, the Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation (IKRF), and the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) seem to be essential.

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