



COVID-19 Pandemic: Lessons Learned and Hippocratic Principles

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Letter to the Editor

Recently we celebrated the one year anniversary of the COVID-19 in New York, and despite the fact that we cope with the second wave, we can now start taking an account of what happened. Remarkable accomplishments were achieved in a short period of time. However, despite the significant advantages that our health care system provided (adequate increase in hospital and ICU beds, sufficient equipment and use of technological advances, and presence of a well-trained health care personnel), the outcome is considered largely not satisfactory due to the high mortality rate [1]. Health care organization CEOs already have started to address these issues and proposed changes [2]. Data has emerged that, likely, disparities in the care and health inequities among New Yorkers might have played a negative role [3,4]. Also, reports published in the media suggested that, possibly, neglect and health care system disruption might have led to the loss of patients' lives with, and without, COVID-19 [5]. In summary, possible established substandard care patterns, during prior ordinary situations, might have worsened further the outcome in the time of crisis. Although these issues easily make headlines and are subject to use for political purposes and other agendas, they may represent deficiencies of the health care system, that were magnified during the pandemic. Several Hippocratic principles are applicable to the COVID-19 pandemic, relevant to all categories of health care practitioners:

1. Dedication to the care of the patient, regardless of "rank, age or intellect".
2. Improvement of living conditions and environmental factors and keep the ill from injustice.
3. Prevent and predict.
4. "Do no harm" principle applied on the individual patient and in the field of public safety.
5. Adherence to ideals and moral principles.
6. Accountability to the medical community and society.
7. Knowing the limits of medicine.

The one-page text of the Hippocratic Oath, in its classic simplicity, is of continuous general interest and its true meaning is the overall respect for the patient and against health care practitioner negligence [6]. As we continue to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, we move forward with several advantages and we have more capabilities than ever, for faster and more efficient actions. However, we still need the Hippocratic high ethical principles and humanistic ideals in the practice of medicine. The COVID-19 pandemic should provide the initiative for a qualitative metamorphosis of our health care system that will last in time and will be transformative and inspiring for the society as a whole.

Keywords: COVID-19; Hippocratic principles; New York

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