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Editorial

Perspective on the Role of Corticosteroids for Treatment of COVID-19 Patients

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The coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) has emerged as a pandemic as declared by the World Health Organization. It is a respiratory disease that occurs primarily due to upper and lower tract infection caused by the SARS-COV-19 virus. Patients are often characterized on the basis of severity of their disease. Patients who are asymptomatic or have mild symptoms often do not require any medical assistance.

Patients with moderate to severe symptoms may experience deterioration of their health which may even progress towards death. The main causal factor for such condition is the inflammatory response generated by the body. The heightened inflammatory response results in a condition referred to as cytokine storm. This response of an individual to the virus is responsible for several health associated conditions experienced by the patient.

Several randomized-control trials have been carried out throughout the world to evaluate the efficacy of corticosteroids in preventing this cytokine storm. The anti-inflammatory response of these drugs was the main driving force behind these controlled trials. It helps in countering the inflammatory response generated by the patient. These results were considered as baseline for healthcare institutes for adapting the use of corticosteroids in treating patients with severe condition.

Though the treatment is highly tempting and it has shown promising result in improving the health of the patients and in reducing the mortality rate, there is another issue that has to be considered during treatment protocol. The drug reduces the symptoms of the patient but prolong the viral clearance. These patients continue to shed viruses and take longer time to attain negative nucleic acid status. It is therefore necessary to increase the duration of isolation of these patients for ensuring that the disease is not spread to healthy individuals. Clinicians must explain this drawback to the patient or their legal representatives so that other family members or other individuals could remain safe.

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