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Communicable Diseases and Non-Communicable Diseases: Which One Is the Priority In the Health Policies?

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Dear Reader,

Generally, it is believed that non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are the leading causes of mortality and morbidity in developed countries, but communicable diseases are the main challenge of health systems in non-developed parts of the world. However, in the past decades, the epidemiologic pattern of diseases has changed in developing countries [1, 2]. In other words, many reports are showing that the main causes of mortality and morbidity in developing countries are not infectious diseases anymore.

In Iran, the good control of communicable diseases by health network during the past three decades led to significant decrease in the incidence and prevalence of these disorders [3].

The health homes in the Iranian health network in rural areas have contributed to this success [4]. Behvarzes who are local health-care staff in rural societies has played a pivotal role in promoting the preventive measures of communicable diseases in villages [4, 5].

In towns and cities of Iran, health centers and health volunteers have done a lot to prevent communicable diseases. However, the success rate of this prevention was higher in rural areas. Regarding NCDs, the achievement of Iranian health system has not been as significant as expected due to the complexity of the

preventive measures in NCDs of a human being. For instance, for almost all NCDs, there is no vaccination approved till now, although studies are being performed [6-8]. Moreover, when the life span increased due to the control of communicable diseases, more people reached to ages made them vulnerable to chronic NCDs as diabetes mellitus, hypertension and their health consequences [9].

Another reason for the emergence of NCDs with high prevalence in the Iranian society is the lifestyle changes especially pertinent to diet and activity [10].

However, neglecting communicable diseases is of major concern. Although infectious diseases seem to kill fewer people directly, they remain important health issues.

First of all, we should consider the emergence of disease pandemics is killing thousands of thousands of people in last twenty years, and world health organization (WHO) experienced difficulties in controlling these crises. We should not forget that there are no borders between countries protecting them against affecting people from these lethal infections.

Second, some intensive care unit (ICU) patients are admitted due to trauma or internal diseases finally die from sepsis. Viral diseases are of particular importance. New variations and continues genetic transformations in viral agents make them remain the killers of

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humans even after successful control of their previous viral forms.

Third, development of resistance of bacteria to current antibiotics is a major challenge for human health infection by so-called “bacterial superinfection” in hospitals can easily complicate simple patients with NCDs. Many chronic diseases predispose patients to these opportunistic infections. Advances in the treatment of chronic diseases and widespread use of immunosuppressive agents puts more and more patients at the risks of infectious diseases. So a great endeavor is needed to combat these antibiotic resistant bacteria, fungi, and viruses.

Furthermore, many lines of evidence show that some chronic non-communicable diseases could be attributable to infectious. Based on these evidences, cancers and autoimmune disorders are among those diseases believed to have some correlations with viral agents. The better control of infectious diseases has a major role in the prevention of NCDs.

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