Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

The coronavirus disease (CoVID-19) pandemic has quickly spread to various countries. As on May 8th, 2020, in India 56342 positive cases of corona had been reported. India with a population of more than 1-35 billion had difficulty in controlling the transmission of coronavirus among its population. Multiple strategies became necessary to handle this outbreak. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare of India raised awareness about this outbreak and to take all necessary actions to control the spread of COVID-19. Indian Government implemented a 55-day lockdown throughout the country to reduce the transmission of the virus. Schools and colleges had shifted to alternative mode of teaching-learning-evaluation and certification. Online mode became popular during these days. India was not prepared fora sudden onslaught of such a crisis due to limited infrastructure in terms of human resource, money and other facilities needed for taking care of this situation. This disease did not spare anybody irrespective of caste, creed, religion on the one hand and have and have not' on the other. Deficiencies in hospital beds, oxygen cylinders, ambulances, hospital staff and crematorium were the most crucial aspects You are a hospital administrator in a public hospital at the time when coronavirus had attacked large number of people and patients were pouring into hospital day in and day out.

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1. **What are your criteria and justification for putting your clinical and non-clinical staff to attend to the patients knowing fully well that it is highly infectious disease and resources and infrastructure are limited?**
2. **If yours is a private hospital, whether your justification and decision would remain same as that of a public hospital?**

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2021	GS - IV	Ethics & Morality

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
20	~250 words

Answer Hint

Duty of care, public health ethics, resource scarcity, distributive justice, staff safety, triage, proportionality, non-maleficence, informed consent, infection prevention, public versus private hospitals, transparency, ethical allocation

Model Answer

Introduction

The hospital administrator must balance the duty to treat patients with staff safety and limited resources. Decisions should be transparent, evidence-based and guided by medical ethics rather than discrimination or favouritism.

Criteria for Staff Deployment

- **Clinical competence:** Assign healthcare workers according to qualifications, training and experience.
- **Patient acuity:** Prioritise staffing for emergency, critical-care and oxygen-dependent patients.
- **Risk assessment:** Consider exposure risk, underlying vulnerabilities and the availability of suitable protective equipment.
- **Fair duty allocation:** Rotate high-risk assignments where feasible, ensure reasonable shifts and prevent exhaustion.

- **Infection prevention:** Provide PPE, training, vaccination where available, testing and isolation arrangements.
- **Role clarity:** Deploy non-clinical staff in logistics, registration, sanitation, communication and supply management without assigning them clinical tasks beyond their competence.
- **Transparent triage:** Allocate scarce resources using clinically relevant criteria and documented protocols.

Public versus Private Hospital

The core ethical principles should remain the same in both settings: human dignity, non-discrimination, patient safety and responsible resource allocation. A private hospital may have different financing and staffing arrangements, but commercial interests cannot ethically justify denying emergency care arbitrarily or exploiting a crisis. Applicable laws and government directions must be followed.

Additional Measures

I would establish an incident-management team, maintain accurate resource inventories, coordinate referrals and communicate honestly with patients' families. Staff concerns should be heard, and occupational risks reduced as far as reasonably possible.

Conclusion

Ethical crisis management requires balancing patient welfare, staff protection and distributive justice. Public and private hospitals may differ operationally, but the fundamental duty to provide safe and fair care should remain consistent.

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