

Trump, COVID-19, Natural Disasters and Health in Iran

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Trump announced its withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on May 8, 2018 and consequent sanctions on the Iranian banking system has meant that provisions for 3% of the drugs that are used in Iran which the Iranian drug companies cannot produce and/or 30% of the raw material for pharmaceuticals which Iran cannot produce has become harder and harder for the Ministry of Health and Medical Education to procure. In another words, the sanctions prevented many essential drugs from getting to Iran and made financial transactions so difficult that medicine prices often rose in the process. This complex web of sanctions has led banks and companies to pull back even from humanitarian trade with Iran (1,2).

For special diseases like Epidermolysis Bullosa, provisions for special dressings, and for spinal muscular dystrophy patients, providing medications like Spinraza has almost become impossible and, unfortunately, we have been witness to loss of many patients in Iran. Of course, United States Secretary of State, Mr. Mike Pompeo, constantly announces that pharmaceuticals and medical equipment are not sanctioned, but in action, when bank exchanges are not possible, the end result is sanctions on pharmaceuticals and medical equipment and there is no doubt that Trump sanctions have seriously impacted humanitarian trade with Iran. Indeed, sanctions include food and medicine and the only point is that these two items have not been mentioned in the sanctions list announced by the Trump administration (2).

Fortunately, in the past three decades, Iran has reached an acceptable level of self-sufficiency in production of the pharmaceuticals needed in the country, and maybe, the most important Iranian success is in the new generation of biotechnology pharmaceuticals and this, for the most part, has reduced problems stemming from Trump's sanctions. Currently, biotechnology products which are produced in the country are estimated to be 22 drugs which allowed the country to take the third ranks in Asia and also to make Iran as the first power in the region in the field of biotechnology production (3). Unfortunately, in the past year, natural disasters like floods and earthquakes have added to the Ministry of Health and Medical Education's difficulties under the shadow of Trump's sanctions. Meanwhile, this month, Coronavirus outbreak in China and subsequent epidemic in other countries like Iran has created a very difficult situation for the Iranian people. It should be emphasized that the Iranian people are compelled to accept these unusual circumstances under the shadow of Trump's sanctions. Iran's history of 2,500 years has shown that Iran will stand but Trump's presidency will end. Iran's physicians and physicians all over the world will conquer COVID-19 just like the fact that Iran's 2,500 years of history has witnessed Cholera and the Plague, and World War I and World War II.

I have to bring to your attention that kindness among our people despite sanctions from different governments is solid and untainted and just like the fact that under these circumstances the Iranian people have sent five million masks for their Chinese friends, the Iranian people, with help from humanitarian people, democratic governments and its own national effort, will conquer this problem as well.

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