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COVID-19 experiences in Korea

Jang-Hee Cho

Kyungpook National University Hospital, Korea

As the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is sweeping worldwide, the World Health Organization has declared it the second pandemic of the 21st century. A total of 198,345 confirmed cases and 2,095 deaths occurred in Korea by July 2021. The Korean Society of Nephrology (KSN) has had an experience of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome in 2015, thus could establish the COVID-19 Task Force Team (TFT) at the very early time of the outbreak in Korea.

The role of COVID-19 TFT includes 1) development of COVID-19 clinical practice guidelines among hemodialysis (HD) units, 2) distribution of medical resources through nephrology network, 3) policy proposal to a government authority, and 4) international cooperation to cope with COVID-19 pandemics.

Based on the clinical practice guideline, KSN managed the outbreak of Daegu city, the epicenter of the South Korean COVID-19 outbreaks. As a result, the number of daily confirmed cases decreased and most patients were properly managed in Daegu. We will discuss our strategies for protecting COVID-19 transmission in the HD units.

COVID-19 TFT also distributed medical resources and prevented medical burnout among HD units. We proposed several policies to the government about transportation for the self-quarantine patients, supports for the hemodialysis units, and prioritization of vaccines to the HD patients. Another role of the TFT was to share the experience of coping with COVID-19 with other countries through online webinars and international conferences.

We will discuss the various activities of COVID-19 TFT and their effects during the session.