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## **KNOWLEDGE OF AND PREPAREDNESS FOR COVID-19 AMONG SOMALI HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS: A CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY**

**Background:** Somalia is considered severely underprepared to contain an outbreak of COVID-19. In limited-resource settings such as Somalia, providing healthcare workers with adequate information on COVID-19 is crucial to improve patient outcomes and mitigate the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. This study assessed the knowledge of, preparedness for, and perceptions toward COVID-19 prevention and treatment among Somali healthcare workers.

**Methods:** In partnership with The Hagarla Institute (<https://hagarlainstitute.org>), a descriptive, cross-sectional survey was completed by 364 Somali healthcare workers in summer of 2020.

**Results:** Participants' most accessed sources of COVID-19 information were from social media (64.8%, n=236), official government and international health organization websites (51.1%, n=186), and traditional media sources such as radio, TV, and newspapers (48.1%, n=175). A majority of participants demonstrated knowledge of treatment of COVID-19, the severity of COVID-19, and the possible outcomes of COVID-19, but only 5 out of 10 symptoms listed were correctly identified by more than 75% of participants. Similarly, only 23.1% of participants correctly identified the expected prevalence of mild or asymptomatic cases. Although participants indicated seeing a median number of 10 patients per week with COVID-19 related symptoms, access to essential medical resources, such as N95 masks (30.2%), facial protective shields (24.5%), and disposable gowns (21.4%), were limited. Moreover, while 71.2% of respondents agreed that the Somali lockdown was effective in reducing the spread of COVID-19, only 31.3% agreed that Somalia was in a good position to contain an emerging outbreak of COVID-19. In addition, only 40.4% of participants agreed that the Somali government's response to the pandemic was sufficient to protect Somali healthcare professionals.

**Conclusion:** This study provides evidence for the need to equip Somali healthcare providers with more information, personal protective equipment, and treatment resources such that they can safely and adequately care for COVID-19 patients and contain the spread of the virus. Social media and traditional news outlets may be effective outlets to communicate information regarding COVID-19 and the Somali government's response to frontline healthcare workers.

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