

## Letter to the Editor

**Cite this article:** Aghakhani N, Ewalds-Kvist BM, Azami M and Amini Rarani S (2024). Community Involvement in COVID-19 Management: A Central Component of Comprehensive Public Health Responses to COVID-19 and Future Health Crises. *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness*, **18**, e327, 1–2  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/dmp.2024.301>

Received: 14 September 2024

Accepted: 16 October 2024

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# Community Involvement in COVID-19 Management: A Central Component of Comprehensive Public Health Responses to COVID-19 and Future Health Crises

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## Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic is highly contagious, with symptoms such as myalgia, cough, fever, and weakness, posing a greater risk to older adults and individuals with chronic conditions. Effective management requires meaningful community involvement to reduce health inequalities and ensure people-centered health care. Engaging local voices, including leaders, health care professionals, and vulnerable populations, enhances decision-making, transparent communication, and resource mobilization. A whole-community approach, involving collaboration across various sectors, strengthens prevention, testing, and recovery efforts. By prioritizing vulnerable groups and adapting interventions to local contexts, community engagement plays a vital role in addressing the pandemic's challenges and building a resilient health care system. This strategy not only aids in managing the current crisis but also prepares public health systems for future emergencies, emphasizing equity and comprehensive public health responses.

Dear Editor,

The COVID-19 pandemic presents a risk due to its highly infectious nature, spreading rapidly through respiratory droplets. Common initial symptoms include myalgia, cough, high fever, weakness, as well as other symptoms such as headache, sputum, hemoptysis, nausea, and diarrhea. These symptoms can be more severe in older individuals with weakened immune systems, and those with chronic diseases such as pulmonary disorders, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and cancer.<sup>1</sup>

Confronting the pandemic requires effective community engagement and the inclusion of local perspectives, voices, administrative concerns, design, planning, services, and governance to achieve essential health care and improve people-centered decision-making. This can reduce health inequalities and promote community health through participation, transparent communication, social activation, and empowerment.<sup>2</sup>

To effectively confront the pandemic, cooperation is needed from local, traditional, and religious leaders; health care professionals; community committees; networks; and vulnerable populations such as the elderly, women, students, and youth. Effective community engagement necessitates a comprehensive approach that involves collaboration across various dimensions, capacity building, decentralized decision-making, mobilization of financial resources, clear communication about health risks, and active engagement of all community members. During emergencies, it is advisable to adopt a whole-community approach to maximize resources from all sectors, including charities, businesses, and charitable organizations, as well as the general population.<sup>3</sup>

Confronting the consequences of the pandemic requires collaborative interventions that encompass various sectors and utilize approaches from both social and biomedical sciences. Community engagement is essential in all aspects of these initiatives, including prevention and control measures, vaccine testing, resilience building, ethical considerations, and recovery processes. It can significantly contribute to the development of a stronger health care system after the acute phase of the pandemic by establishing an equity-centered public health response. Nevertheless, for these efforts to yield positive outcomes, community engagement should be meaningful, adhere to best practices and guidelines, and be tailored to the specific social context.<sup>4</sup>

Meaningful community engagement is essential for supporting a public health response that prioritizes equity. By involving communities in decision-making and recovery efforts, the needs of vulnerable groups can be prioritized, and interventions tailored to local contexts. This approach helps to address health disparities and build resilient, impartial health systems. Effective community engagement can play a key role in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and promoting community health. Collaboration, transparency, and involvement in prevention, testing, and recovery efforts can help address severe symptoms, support high-risk groups, and build stronger health systems. Community engagement should be a central component of comprehensive public health responses to COVID-19 and future health crises.<sup>5</sup>

### Conclusion

COVID-19 is a highly contagious disease characterized by symptoms including myalgia, cough, fever, and weakness. To confront this challenge, the community should involve local voices to reduce health inequalities. To achieve this, cooperation with leaders, health

care professionals, and community members must take place to ensure transparent communication and resource mobilization. Collaboration and participation in prevention and recovery efforts, adapting interventions to local contexts, and prioritizing vulnerable groups are crucial for a comprehensive public health response to COVID-19 and future health crises.

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