



Health Concept About Arbaeen's Foot-Pilgrimage

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Dear Editor,

Arbaeen's foot-pilgrimage is a unique annual mass gathering pilgrimage of about 20 million Shia Muslims from the worldwide. This foot-pilgrimage is a mourning ceremony for the tragedy of Imam Hussein who is one of the members of Prophet's household in Islam (1). This tragic ceremony is related to the heroic movement of Imam Hossein and his followers that were sacrificed for the revival of Islam principles. This foot-pilgrimage can be considered as one of the largest religious gatherings in the world in which a non-homogeneous population from various countries travels 80 km from Najaf to arrive Karbala on 20th Safar Anno Hegirae. The Marja (source of emulation) and Shi'a scholars believe the historical basis of this event is the arrival of the captives and Imam Hossein' followers to Karbala for the burial of the Imam's cut head.

Unfortunately, Iraq has experienced massive damages due to several wars and terrorist attacks in the past few decades. Therefore, reconstruction of equipment and infrastructures of this country could promote better serving to tourist pilgrims in Arbaeen's foot-pilgrimage. Any crowd foot-pilgrimage may arise some health problems such as the epidemic of infectious diseases, human stampede, lack of proper transport system, inappropriate habitation, lack of specialist' physician, improper health system, terrorist threats, climate changes, etc. The potentially dangerous epidemic of infectious diseases and human stampedes calls for immediate consideration of health systems (2,3).

The spirituality of Arbaeen's foot-pilgrimage encourages pilgrims for the suffering of problems and dangers. The perception of difficulty is one of the important components of this spiritual experience.

Trauma injuries due to stampede are notable in pil-

grimages. For a practical example, the 2015 Hajj stampede caused at least 2431 deaths (3). Even though there has not been a single reported severe stampede and trauma accident in Arbaeen's foot-pilgrimage, a real crisis dilemma warrants specific consideration and challenges for health-care providers. Preemptive crisis preparation can help in the inhibition of any untoward events.

Mass gatherings such as Arbaeen's foot-pilgrimage have complicated public health challenges that can be modified through health and disaster management organizations of specialists from neighboring countries including of healthcare professionals and specialist's physicians. Pilgrims should be instructed in essential preventive methods associated with infectious diseases and human stampedes. Furthermore, the preparation of the ceremonies throughout Arbaeen's foot-pilgrimage and crowd management can decrease these accidents. Applying various digital programs and monitoring can recognize missed pilgrims, update their locations, and inform their group guides to further prevent health problems. Various types of Tele-medicines can more improve treatment service for damaged pilgrims or any crisis incident. Developing in triage systems and using a rescue helicopter can reduce any potential morbidity and mortality. It is suggested that healthcare workers from neighboring countries work in coordination with the health team and government of Iraq.

Footnotes

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