Should Travellers have Priorities for COVID 19 Vaccine?

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Authors’ contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author NZA ideation, conceptualization, managing the literature searches, writing original draft, writing review and editing, project administration. Author SMA conceptualization, managing the literature searches, writing review and editing. Authors NF and MJA writing original draft, writing review and editing. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Article Information

DOI: 10.9734/JPRI/2020/v32i473111

Letter to the Editor

Received 02 January 2021
Accepted 30 January 2021
Published 06 February 2021

Keywords: COVID-19; vaccination; travelers; prevention.

To the Editor-in-Chief,

Travel forms an integral part for various purposes mainly to maintain healthy national and international business. The international business travel constitutes 14% of the total travel [1]. The travel industry is known to be third largest export category globally and has accounted US$ 1.7 trillion exports in 2018 or nearly US $5 billion per day for international

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tourism. Thus, the international tourism has contributed in 7% of global exports and 29% of the world’s services exports [1,2]. However due to SARS-COV-2 pandemic, the travel industry has faced dramatic set-back. It was observed that the initial cross-country and cross-continent spread of COVID-19 disease was primarily via air travel. Hence, the air travel was banned across various countries. However, the ban in airlines and domestic as well as international travel has caused huge economic loss and has affected global market [3].

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the preparedness of safe travel on restarting the air travel was given emphasis. The major component of safe travel depends on traveller’s health. Risk factors such as age and underlying co-morbidities like chronic cardiac or respiratory illness, diabetes mellitus and immunocompromise state pose a greater risk for severe COVID-19 [4-7]. The second essential component is determination of nature and type of travel for example if air-travel, adequate safety measures taken by the traveller, the ground staff as well as airline crew in terms of using masks, maintaining distance and sanitisation within regular intervals, entry and exit screening and temperature checks, case finding and contact tracing, and mandatory isolation and quarantine for returning residents or travelers. Lastly, insurance policies and government regulations for air travel should be looked upon [8].

Most of airlines around the world are strictly complying with precautionary measures during COVID-19 pandemic [8]. As it is well known that prevention is better than cure, which focuses the need for vaccination for a traveller. The recent version of International Health Regulations (IHR) recommends the use of vaccine entry requirements for “any event with the potential to be a public health emergency of international concern”. Categorising the areas on basis of the burden of COVID-19 active cases and potential ratio of cured to ratio of deceased cases will give us the actual picture of the safety for travel and would help us in risk categorisation. Learning from the strict regulations of entry requirements of yellow fever vaccination into vulnerable countries can be studied and implemented accordingly for feasibility of vaccination in case of COVID-19 scenario [9-10]. If such mandatory considerations are proposed for COVID-19 vaccination by IHR, it would certainly prevent the further spread of the disease and ensure travel safety.

In summary, this letter was aimed to emphasize that the requirement of COVID-19 vaccination for travellers could be based on risk-based categorisation of countries requiring COVID-19 vaccination where entry requirements are recognised, vaccination safety and affordability, acceptable protection rate, and duration of protection must be scrutinised. The intent should be protection of travellers from contracting the disease and prevention of travellers introducing the disease into a high-risk country.

CONSENT
It is not applicable.

ETHICAL APPROVAL
It is not applicable.

COMPETING INTERESTS
Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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DOI:10.1038/s41574-020-0353-9
Available: https://doi.org/10.31838/ijpr/2021.13.01.519

Available: https://doi.org/10.1093/jtm/taaa205

Available: https://doi.org/10.1093/jtm/taaa112


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Peer-review history:
The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:
http://www.sdiarticle4.com/review-history/65100