
**Pandemic and Healthcare Scam with Special Reference to Robin Cook's
Viral**

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Abstract

Who likes troubles, but in life one doesn't always get something just by wanting it, right? On one hand, where life was going on in a normal way, who would have imagined that in the coming few days, everything would change completely. When would be whose last breath, when would be whose last meeting with whom, that fear of it comes to my mind without even remembering it. When the COVID-19 pandemic spread, while some people were happy seeing the positive in this matter that they are getting time at home, getting time for hobbies, getting time for themselves, on the other hand some people were worried due to poverty, starvation and being stuck somewhere far away. This is not the first time when any humans have seen the emergence of any pandemic. History has the record of deadly pandemics that have happened throughout. Pandemics have affected social lives since the establishment of civilization.

Keywords: pandemic, death, deadly, problems, outbreak, fear, history etc.

Introduction

It is said that change is the law of the world and time never remains the same. Life is not easy on earth. Wherever there is life, problems keep coming. History has always kept a record of good and bad. Different epidemics and disasters keep occurring from time to time. Sometimes this wrath of God has been seen in the form of human mistakes. A similar time is mentioned in Boccaccio's Decameron many centuries ago. 2020 is such a year whose name or hearing about it reminds people of

a scene where there are corpses everywhere, melancholy all around and a strange soonness has spread. When would be whose last breath, when would be whose last meeting with whom, that fear of it comes to my mind without even remembering it. Being in one's own home and being away from the people at home, that time of quarantine hollows the person from within, how did one spend that time worrying about the situation getting worse, this is not hidden from any of us.

It is said that just like every coin has two aspects, similarly when something bad happens, something good also remains hidden in it. On the one hand, the disaster that came in the year 2020 which is known as COVID-19, led to lockdown, quarantine, and isolation, while on the other hand, due to all these, we adopted other ways of running away from life like social distancing. We all learned to live life together and by working from home.

But it is said that some people see an opportunity even in a problem, while some people feel that the opportunity is also a problem. Exactly this is what happened when the COVID-19 pandemic spread. While some people were happy seeing the positive in this matter that they are getting time at home, getting time for hobbies, getting time for themselves, on the other hand some people were worried due to poverty, starvation and being stuck somewhere far away.

This research paper explores Cook's medical thriller *Viral* which shows us the grotesque form of healthcare systems. Robert Brian "Robin" Cook is an American physician and novelist. He is the author of over forty books and writes about medicine and healthcare issues affecting lives. He is known for introducing the word 'medical' to the thriller genre. He is the master of the medical thriller. His recent bestsellers include *Genesis*, *Pandemic*, *Viral*, and *Night Shift* etc.

Cook's *Viral* focuses on the ethical issues of healthcare services which destroys many happy lives. We rely on healthcare system so much but we are not aware of frauds caused by them. It is like adding insult to injury when we become familiar with the discrepancies. A person never bothers about his/her financial conditions when it comes to save a beloved's life but sometimes someone's life becomes useless when it comes to greed. Greed is something that has been leading many lives to death for more than a decade or two. We have been the eyewitnesses

of the recent pandemic that has turned many lives upside down by ruining them financially. It was like a golden opportunity to become financially sound by squeezing the money as their hospital bills. Healthcare services were not questioned earlier but the Covid-19 pandemic has made the general public open their eyes. However it has been a gradual process but now we are very much aware of it but still helpless. It is not that this pandemic has turned the entire healthcare system to be corrupted because it already was. Sometimes we open our eyes when it's too late. Well, here in this paper, I am going to discuss Cook's one of the most famous medical thrillers 'Viral'. This paper examines the rising corruption of the healthcare system which we hardly notice or understand. One gets to know of something really fishy when that person gets trapped literally because 'own experiences teach better'. Robin Cook, by his medical thrillers tries to make us familiar with the dark side of healthcare business. It has worsened in recent years. In Cook's Viral, we come across this harsh reality when such an unimaginable hospital bill ruins one family when a family's joy and happiness turns to tears and intense grief.

Cook's Viral is a fictionalized form of the dark reality. The novel is set in New York. Brian Murphy and his family were enjoying a relaxing summer vacation when his wife, Emma, came down with mild flu-like symptoms. Emma (Brian's wife) was bitten by a female mosquito (Asian tiger mosquito) and she was diagnosed with Eastern Equine Encephalitis; one of the rarest viruses leading to death.

In order to get her treated well and to save her life Brian tried his best but he couldn't. Despite their pathetic condition, the corrupt healthcare system had no mercy on them. The man is tortured mentally as much as he could be. Unfortunately, his little daughter also got infected to that deadly virus and lost her life. Throughout all those scary situations he realized that he lost his family just because of the negligence caused by that very hospital system. It all happened because of the greed behind the ridiculous personality of the hospital's CEO. It is not the hospital only but the Insurance Company also. People buy an insurance policy for such difficult situations but they are cheated. In order to understand all these types of scams which ruin many lives, Cook's Viral is a correct choice. While going through this novel we can feel that gut wrenching feeling which is enough to shatter any simple person. We know, 'nectar poisons in excess' and the same thing happens here in this novel. Mr. Brian who lost his wife and daughter because of the negligence caused by the hospital

system, finally loses his patience and turns out to be an avenger.

As we have seen how badly the Covid-19 pandemic has affected people's minds, the same can be seen here in this novel. The main character Brian is unable to bear such a terrible betrayal after seeing people dying all around him and losing his wife and daughter too. Brian not only loses his family but also experiences bankruptcy by losing his life's hard-earned money and feels mentally compelled to take revenge on the corrupt healthcare system. Although the story of this novel is fictionalized, this is the harsh reality of our healthcare system which we understand very late and this is what happens here with Brian. It is said that circumstances are the biggest factor in changing a person's nature, which happened to Brian. Brian was a man who lived a simple life and was happy with his beloved family. When he is faced with such a bitter truth and he sees such families being ruined besides his own, in which their entire lives are ruined because of someone else's greed and ignorance. Then he realizes that he has not given up on these secrets until the result is that he starts taking decisions from the mentality of an ordinary human being with the mentality of an avenger. Mentally tortured by the fraud, injustice and huge losses suffered by his family, he becomes a murderer. This novel then was a small tool that can help us open our eyes to understand the fraud of the healthcare system around us while in reality. This fraud and injustice has become so prevalent during the Covid-19 pandemic that there is a need to take strict action and create as much public awareness as possible. This pandemic and healthcare system has given many people mental illnesses like anxiety and depression, they need attention.

COVID-19 in itself is not a simple thing. Coronaviruses are frequent ribonucleic acid viruses of the Coronaviridae family, which are responsible for digestive and respiratory infections in humans and also in animals. The virus owes its name to the shape of its viral particles, bearing growths that evoke a crown. It is an invisible threat that worries the whole world. COVID-19 first appeared in Wuhan in December 2019 and caused fatal respiratory infections, and then, it spread gradually in the world and, thus, became a global pandemic.

What is the scariest thing about a pandemic is that it is such an invisible enemy which can be present in any form and anywhere. This is not the first time when any humans have seen the emergence of any pandemic. History has the record of deadly pandemics that have happened throughout. We can go through the records of

numerous types of pandemics such as Athenian Plague, Antonine Plague, Justinian Plague, The Seven Cholera Pandemics, Spanish Flu, Asian Flu, Hong Kong Flu, HIV/AIDS, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, Swine Flu, Ebola and now Coronavirus Disease 19. Even if we go through the amount of loss caused by these above-mentioned pandemics, we find that they have been quite hazardous to social lives.

Coronavirus Disease 19- The most recent pandemic which is caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-COV2). The first case was reported to WHO from Wuhan on December 31, 2019, and it was declared as a global pandemic on March 11, 2020.

We can trace the history of pandemics through a number of books written in different centuries based on different types of pandemics. Pandemics have affected social lives since the establishment of civilization. Hippocrates recorded the first known pandemic in 412 BC. Numerous outbreaks were recorded in the Middle Ages also. It was 1666 when the term 'pandemic' was first used.

The COVID-19 had severe impacts on health systems, economies and societies. According to researchers this pandemic has its impact on the environment, economy, education and human psychology.

Most predominantly when we talk about health issues, we find that mental health has been widely affected. A large number of people have reported psychological distress, depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress. It is said that loneliness is the biggest disease and the condition of being isolated due to the COVID-19 pandemic has increased these mental health issues among people to a great extent. For children and adolescents being made to stay at home may have increased the risk of family stress or abuse, which are risk factors for mental health problems. Social measures also prevented people from accessing care at that time. And in many cases, poor knowledge and misinformation about the virus fueled fears and worries that stopped people from seeking help. The impact of COVID-19 on mental health cannot be underestimated. It cannot be taken lightly.

Anxiety and stress were significantly increased, leading to negative impacts

on both self-efficacy and sleep. Imposed social distancing caused the feelings of loneliness in people. Due to feeling alone, people suffer from mood disorders, suicidal thoughts and so on. Pandemic causes so many psychological problems. No such problem comes alone. There were no less problems before COVID-19, but after that there were many other health issues which were identified late. COVID-19 has caused many long term problems. It is worth noting that most mental health services were not active any longer in the midst of the outbreak.

The pandemic not only made people sick or killed many, but it also made who knows how many people unemployed. Due to the death rate being very high, many people lost their loved ones.

Living after losing your loved ones is no less than a disease in itself. If the loneliness, unemployment and the scene of death all around do not make someone mentally sick then what else can one do. It is obvious that when a person is stressed, worried or afraid, first of all his sleep gets disturbed. Well, if it is a matter of a day or two then one can understand, but when there is an atmosphere of death, unemployment and loneliness all around for several months continuously, then how well can one keep himself mentally fit? All these problems do not affect the mind in one day but after a long time and leave the person mentally sick for a long time. In surveys, the most common symptoms reported were trouble sleeping and feeling anxiety or nervous.

Loneliness, fear of infection, suffering and death for oneself and for loved ones, grief after bereavement and financial worries have also all been cited as stressors leading to anxiety and depression.

On one hand, when we are talking about the impacts of the pandemic on normal people, we should not forget about the financial crises caused by it. Undoubtedly, the health and care sector are one of the most severely hit by the pandemic but healthcare fraud has been documented to have affected the general population in a very bad way.

Conclusion

In a very brief way we can say that people are never ready to welcome the emergence of pandemics but it doesn't matter. Pandemics occur due to unusual

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mistakes caused by us. It is our responsibility to be prepared for all types of bad situations. Escaping never helps. Seeing all those bad impacts of the pandemic, we should be wise enough to understand our responsibilities. This Covid-19 has not affected our health only but our social, economic and educational systems also. According to the International Labor Organization, almost 400 million people lost their full-time jobs due to COVID-19 globally. The full impact of COVID-19 on the primary and secondary education system has not yet been fully revealed. Response to COVID-19 globally displayed that a consortium of scientists, healthcare workers, industries, and government policymakers is required for concerted management of the pandemic and that it cannot be solely managed at a national level. The COVID-19 pandemic has proved that we are still not prepared to detect, predict, or control the spread of novel pathogen pandemics. At the end of this I would like to share my brief opinion that we will have to learn our responsibilities and be very well prepared for all types of situations in order to ensure our better future not only for ourselves but for the welfare of human lives.

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