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Economic Sanctions Could Endanger the Health of MS Patients

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Background: Political and economic factors can negatively or positively affect access to care and treatment; however, negative affect of economic sanction have not attention in MS research studies. Our aim was to assessment the stress of MS patients and their challenges for receiving health services in 2018-2019 due to political and economic sanction in Iran.

Method(s): A cross-sectional study was conducted in Tehran, Iran from 10th January to 30th August 2019 among MS patients at MS society and Sina Hospital. A questionnaire was designed in the MS research center of Tehran University of Medical Sciences to measure the main epidemiological variables regarding stress and challenges for receiving care and treatment services associated with sanction.

Result: Among 578 MS patients enrolled in study 827 (79.6%) were female and 649 (63.3%) were married. Mean age of patients was 36.48 years old. Mean years of living with MS was 7.5 years. Totally 366 (35.8%) were employed, 389 (38%) house wife and 268 (26.2) were unemployed. The average family income estimated as 267 US\$ per mount with average cost of MS care as 60 US\$. Totally 867 (83.4%) cases, mentioned increased of life expenses in 2019 in comparing to previous year. The majority of MS patients had experiences of very high and high stress regarding increased cost of treatment and care service such as drugs, hospitalization, rehabilitation, psychological counseling. More than 50% pf patients had experiences of reducing the quality of nutrition and physical, social and cultural activities due to economic burden after sanction.

Conclusion: Sanctions have direct and in direct negative impacts on MS patients' health, especially those on low-income. It has been argued that economic sanctions have adversely affected access to drugs, treatment and care.