

PANDEMIC – NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

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Abstract – Practitioner talk.

The COVID 19 pandemic created new opportunities for Magen David Adom (MDA) to provide additional services to the community – in sampling and vaccinating. MDA was able to provide critically needed services. International experience sharing through NO FEAR project, was key in better preparing and adapting the response. Magen David Adom (MDA), Israel's National Emergency Medical Service is deeply involved since the very beginning of the COVID 19 in the pandemic. However, not traditional role for an EMS, MDA personnel is involved in sampling of suspected and confirmed cases (PCR and rapid antigen tests), vaccination and vaccine promotion. All those activities were conducted especially among the most vulnerable population. MDA got involved in those activities as it has personnel (paid staff and volunteers) trained in working in personal protective equipment (PPE), and the agility to rapidly expand operations. These activities both allowed for rapid response to an urgent emerging need on the field at the country and population needs level and created at the same time very positive reaction from the public towards MDA. These activities were greatly supported by international experience sharing, facilitated through the network created in NO FEAR project (This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 programme, under grant agreement no. 786670). No-Fear | Project website (see below). From very early in the outbreak of COVID 19, frequent exchange of experiences and lessons observed from different partners globally took place. This exchange took advantage from the fact that the progress of the outbreak was different on different countries, thus one country that was "behind" in the time line, could benefit from other's experience. The lessons observed covered a wide array on subjects; personnel management, IPC (infection prevention and control) measures including disinfection and PPE, long distance transportation of patients, EMS contingency planning (e.g. challenges to the supply chain). As an overarching conclusion, the COVID 19 pandemic created many challenges to EMS operators, in many aspects related to their contingency planning and business continuity, along with many opportunities to better serve the community. International, real time experience sharing was key to achieving this ambitious goal.

Keywords: pandemic, COVID19, EMS, NO FEAR project, response, contingency plan

¹ <https://www.mdais.org/> and no-fearproject.eu