A Comparative Study on COVID-19 and Dengue: A Sri Lankan Scenario

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The viral outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 has now resulted into a pandemic: COVID-19 with health impacts of catastrophic proportions. While this global catastrophe rightly demands the world's heed, Dengue which causes a high disease burden is neglected in Sri Lanka. This study aims to compare the disease rates of COVID-19 and Dengue in Sri Lanka during last two years and analyse the interdependence of those diseases. This comparative study was carried out utilizing the data sources from the World Health Organization, Epidemiology Unit of Sri Lanka, Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and Health promotion Bureau of Sri Lanka. Statistical analytical comparisons of the incidence, prevalence, and mortality of the diseases were analysed. In terms of narrative research, experts and professionals in the health sector were consulted and their perspectives were considered. Both COVID-19 and dengue have simultaneously negatively impacted the management, care, and control interventions specific to each of the two diseases. Ceasing of dengue control measures, reassigning of health workers due to COVID-19, refusing to go to hospitals because of fear of COVID-19 among patients diagnosed with dengue has contributed to the subsidence in the management and control of Dengue in Sri Lanka. However, lockdown and minimal daytime exposure to mosquitoes may have had a role to play in the slow growth rate of Dengue cases where a total of 31,031 cases were reported in 2020 in comparison to 105,049 in 2019. A total of 35 and 22 deaths were reported for Dengue and COVID-19 respectively as of November for the year 2020. Therefore, Sri Lanka needs to be vigilant in developing proactive policies and allocating adequate resources to prevent and manage dengue and other vector-borne diseases in the era where COVID-19 has taken precedent.

Keywords: COVID-19, Dengue, Incidence, Mortality, Prevalence, SARS-CoV-2

The Department of Plant Sciences, Faculty of Science, University of Colombo is acknowledged for providing excellent facilities to make the study a success.