COVID-19 in Cuba: Assessing the National Response.

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Abstract:

The COVID-19 pandemic exhibits different characteristics in each country, related to the extent of SARS-CoV-2 local transmission, as well as the speed and effectiveness of epidemic response implemented by authorities. This study presents a descriptive epidemiological analysis of the daily and cumulative incidence of confirmed cases and deaths in Cuba from COVID-19 in the first 110 days after first-case confirmation on March 11, 2020. During this period, 2340 cases (20.7 x 100,000 population) were confirmed, of which 86 patients died (case fatality 3.67%; 52 men and 34 women). Mean age of the deceased was 73.6 years (with a minimum of 35 years and a maximum of 101), with the average age of men lower than that of women. More than 70% of all deceased had associated noncommunicable diseases. The incidence curve ascended for five weeks and then descended steadily. The average number of confirmed cases and deaths for the last week included (June 23--28, 2020) were 25 and 1 respectively; the curve always moved within the most favorable forecast zone of available mathematical models and the effective reproductive number fell below 1 after the fifth week following the onset of the epidemic. We present the prevention and control measures implemented during this period--some unique to Cuba--and assess their effectiveness using two analytical tools: comparison of observed deaths and confirmed cases with those predicted by mathematical models; and estimation of the effective reproductive rate of SARS-CoV-2. Some distinctive features of this strategy include nationwide door-to-door active screening for individuals with fever and/or symptoms of respiratory distress, isolation of cases and quarantine of contacts of confirmed cases and of persons suspected of having the virus. During this period, Cuba's response to the epidemic was successful in flattening the curve and limiting transmission, resulting in fewer cases and a lower number of subsequent deaths.