



**PAKISTAN ELECTRONIC MEDIA
REGULATORY AUTHORITY
ISLAMABAD**

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Operations Wing,
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Tel: 051-9107128
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June 25, 2020

**All Satellite TV Channel Licensees
(News and Current Affairs)**


**SUBJECT: DIRECTIVES VIS-À-VIS COVERAGE / REPORTING OF CORONA
VIRUS (COVID-19) ON ELECTRONIC MEDIA**

Further to Electronic Media (Programmes & Advertisement) Code of Conduct 2015 and various advice issued by the Authority on the subject matter during the period January 31, 2020 till June 23, 2020, following directives and guidelines are being issued for Electronic Media licensees for the purpose of coverage and reporting on Coronavirus (COVID-19).

2. It is unequivocally an acknowledged fact that public awareness is a key pillar of response strategy against any crisis situation and presently the COVID19 pandemic. Unprecedented and focused media campaign run by private satellite TV channels for the last several months are highly appreciated. Pakistani media has helped the masses to know the sensitivities associated with this pandemic and its impact on required profound behavioral change.
3. The pandemic is likely to continue for some time and a peak is expected in the near future. Now more than ever, responsible and authentic reporting on electronic media is required in order to keep public informed, avoid panic and maintain calm. The challenge in coming days and weeks would need continued risk and crisis communication countering disinformation and flat out fake news. Besides, the most important practice would be to avoid any coverage which creates sensationalism.
4. Healthcare workers are real front lines heroes in the fight against this pandemic. Hence why, it is a need to pay befitting tribute to their untiring contributions for public safety and well being, while also highlighting their requirements to safeguard their working environments. Media should avoid showing images and videos of public interference in their line of duty while performing sacred work of saving lives of Pakistani brethren fallen ill to COVID19.
5. Media already being aware of the situation has aired dedicated campaign to pay tribute to these saviors. As the pandemic situation is likely to intensify in the near future, private electronic media licensees are required to follow guidelines stated below while covering/reporting on the COVID19 pandemic .
 - a. All the media houses may continue to ensure dedicated public awareness campaigns to create awareness about this pandemic and to support the efforts and sacrifices being made by

healthcare workers like doctors, nurses, paramedics and other allied health professionals across the country.

- b. All the media houses must constitute special editorial board with the purpose to verify authenticity, accuracy and correctness of the information pertaining to any drug, vaccine or other treatment (e.g. plasma treatment) through Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP), Federal and Provincial health ministries. This is essential in order to avoid negative impact of misinformation about drugs, vaccine that could ultimately damage public health and lead to loss of life.
 - c. Media houses should ensure that only qualified and registered health care professionals working on COVID19 are provided airtime for expert opinion. Any videos or information available on social media of individuals portraying of being health care workers (e.g. individuals wearing doctors' attires) spreading disinformation and fake news about the pandemic (treatment, hospital conditions etc.) must be avoided. To counter disinformation and fake news on broadcast media, following is suggested
 - i. Being global pandemic, every doctor is not able to comment on COVID19. Therefore, opinion from recognized subject experts must be sought.
 - ii. Expert opinion and views of especially trained and recognized epidemiologist, nominated as health experts at Federal, Provincial or Hospital level must be sought in order to avoid sensationalism.
 - iii. No information should be aired which tantamount to character assassination of frontline healthcare workers.
 - iv. Projections about COVID19 is an essential tool for the government and offers insight to decision makers. This effort is led by Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination under the NCOC platform. Dedicated efforts of multiple teams of epidemiologists and modular produce these projections. These projections are made public through the NCOC platform. Media houses are therefore required to avoid airing projections which are not based on ground realities and stoke unnecessary panic.
 - v. Any violence at hospitals, emergency situation, attack, offensive behaviour towards healthcare workers may not be telecast in order to protect honour and dignity of healthcare workers as the same may demoralize them.
6. This issues with the approval of the competent Authority.


(Muhammad Pahir)
General Manager
Operations-Broadcast Media

Copy for Information:

1. Director General (Operations-Broadcast) PEMRA
2. General Manager (Monitoring) PEMRA
3. DGM to Chairman PEMRA.
4. AGM to Executive Member, PEMRA