



# The Coronavirus (COVID-19) preventive measures proposed by the Fathers of Medicine Hippocrates of Kos (460–370 BC), Ibn Sina (980–1037) and Şerefeddin Sabuncuoğlu (1385–1468)

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## Introduction

Recently, as the death toll from the coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic increases, more governments around the world have decided to lock down their countries to decrease propagation rate of infection and prevent their health systems from overwhelming. National health systems equipped with state-of-the-art medical equipment and armies of medical personnel with the highest knowledge of medicine are helpless against the invisible enemy whose deadly effects were first seen in China. For the Western world, now the epicenter of contagion, the virus offered a serious test for health systems and national solidarity.

There is no doubt that COVID-19 is not the first infection epidemic to affect humanity. In past, like today, deadly virus and disease outbreaks were part of everyday life. Over the centuries a handful of plague, smallpox, measles, and flu strains are believed to have killed hundreds of millions, and by the time of progress, these deaths triggered development of

modern medicine in the world. Fortunately, some precautions against these diseases were suggested by the fathers of medicine, Greek physician Hippocrates of Kos (460–370 BC), Persian polymath Ibn Sina (980–1037), and medieval Ottoman physician, Şerefeddin Sabuncuoğlu (1385–1468) (Fig. 1 and Cover Figure)

Out of these scientists, Hippocrates, the father of medicine, is one of the most distinguished figures in the medical history (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippocrates>). He used the terms such as “endemic,” “epidemic,” and “pandemic” to categorize illnesses; more importantly he used only clean water on wounds and emphasized using only clean water on wounds and keeping the patient clean and sterile (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippocrates>). Afterwards, Ibn Sina, known as Avicenna in the West, is the father of early modern medicine and his most famous two encyclopedias, “*The Book of Healing*” and “*The Canon of Medicine*,” were used standard medical texts at many medieval universities in the world until the beginning of the 18th century [1] (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avicenna>). Lastly, Şerefeddin Sabuncuoğlu, one of the most famous physicians of Anatolia in the 15th century, produced three great works including the Turkish translation of the “*Akrabazin (Pharmacology)*,” “*Cerrahiyyet’u’l Haniye (Imperial Surgery)*,” and “*Mücerrebname (Experimental Treatment Methods Book)*,” as a result of being affected by scholars such as Hippocrates and Ibn Sina [2, 3] ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sabuncuo%C4%9Flu\\_%C5%9Eerfeddin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sabuncuo%C4%9Flu_%C5%9Eerfeddin)).

Interestingly, in their books, the fathers of medicine summarize what should be done on various epidemic diseases transmitted from person to person and their simple precautions centuries ago exactly coincide with the today’s measures

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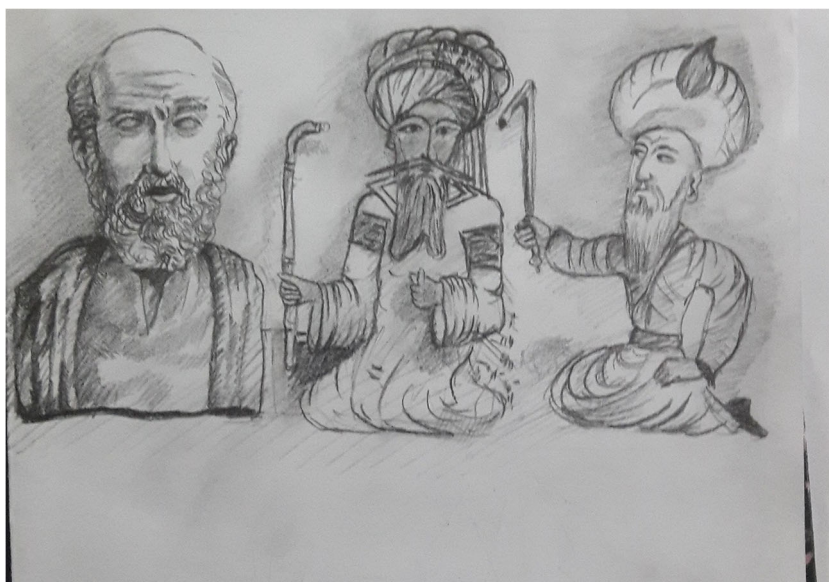
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**Fig. 1** The fathers of medicine: Hippocrates (460–370 BC) (left), Ibn Sina (980–1037) (center), and Şerefeddin Sabuncuoğlu (1385–1468) (right), suggesting the COVID-19 measures in the world in the past (a drawing of the fathers of medicine was produced by medical illustrator Ahmet Kuzu for cover picture)



taken against COVID-19, called “social distancing” and “personal hygiene,” all over the world today as follows [1, 2, 3]:

- Clean with vinegar.
- Do not build crowds.
- Leave the markets.
- Do not worship together.
- Sit in your home and be cheerful.
- Illness runs away from joy.

To fight a tiny virus, which is the microscopic agent of COVID-19 disease, thus, the world has turned to over-millennium-old recommendations of the fathers in the field of medicine.

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