

Coronavirus Pandemic

Global outbreak of COVID-19: a new challenge?

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Dear Editor,

In December 2019, a series of cases were reported in Wuhan, the capital of Hubei province, with clinical presentations much resembling those of viral pneumonia [1]. Initially, the reported cases had a history of exposure linked with a seafood wholesale market in the city of Wuhan [2,3]. The World Health Organization (WHO) identified the causative agent as a 2019-new coronavirus (2019-nCoV) [4]. Later, the WHO re-named the disease as Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

On 12 January, 2020 China shared the genetic sequence of COVID-19 with other countries for the development of a specific and rapid diagnostic kit and vaccine [4]. The availability of the virus's genetic sequence and initial data on the epidemiology and clinical signs are only the first steps to understanding the threat posed by this pathogen. The disease presents with fever, cough, and shortness of breath [2,3,4].

Forty-nine other countries including (Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan) have reported confirmed cases of COVID-19 [5]. Over the last few weeks, the cases have increased at an alarming rate [6]. As of 28 February 2020 (01: 05 AM Nanjing Time), a total of 85,550 confirmed cases of COVID-19 were reported globally, of which 78,497 cases were in Mainland China. Outside China highest number of cases of COVID-19 was reported in South Korea (1,766), Japan including "Diamond Princes cruise ship" (894), Italy (528), Iran

(245), Singapore (93), Hong Kong (92), United States (60), Kuwait (43), and Thailand (40). The number of mortality reached to 2,810, of which 2,641 deaths were reported in Hubei province of China. Maximum number of deaths outside China was reported in Iran (26), Italy (14), and South Korea (13). The overall mortality rate is 3.28% (2,810/85,550) [5].

The reported cases in other countries had traveling history or imported from China [7,8]. Some countries had already evacuated their citizens from China and others are preparing to do so. If the outbreak is not controlled on time, the consequences for developing countries will be very serious because of their weak health systems and disease surveillance. As we know, China is still a developing country in some ways, despite rapid economic progress, development, infrastructure and technology over recent decades. The current COVID-19 outbreak has hit just as the government is trying to support universal health coverage for all citizens. However, with an increasing number of cases across the globe, this outbreak of COVID-19 may soon reach African countries, where an epidemic could push the region into recession if it is not properly managed. A new outbreak in Africa would be extremely difficult to control due to the lack of professional health workers protective equipment, health facilities and diagnostic kits for COVID-19 detection. Therefore, an extraordinary effort is required by regional authorities and global assistance to prevent

the spread of the infection to low- and middle-income countries with suboptimal health infrastructure [9]. All the challenges related to COVID-19 must be recognized and addressed at the global level to ensure rapid and effective response measures are taken. In the current situation, the One Health approach is mandatory to control and stop the spread of COVID-19 [10].

Author's contributions

Conceptualization: THM, and TA. Data curation: THM and TA. Writing-original draft preparation: THM, and TA. Writing-review and editing: THM, TA, MK, H, and PW.

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