

How the new coronavirus developed

January 23 2020

A new coronavirus, a mysterious SARS-like disease, has spread around China and three other Asian countries since first emerging in the central Chinese city of Wuhan.

A timeline:

Alarm raised

The World Health Organization (WHO) is alerted on December 31, 2019, by the Chinese authorities of a string of pneumonia-like cases in Wuhan, a city of 11 million people.

Patients are quarantined and work begins on identifying the origin of the pneumonia.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identifies a seafood market suspected to be at the centre of the outbreak. It is closed on January 1, 2020.

New coronavirus

On January 9, the WHO says that the outbreak in Wuhan was caused by a previously unknown type of coronavirus, which is a broad family ranging from the common cold to more serious illnesses like SARS.

First death

The Chinese health authorities say a first person has died of the virus on January 11. They revise downwards the number of sick people to 41.

Spreads beyond China

On January 13, the virus spreads beyond China's borders for the first time with a case emerging in Thailand, according to the WHO. The victim is a Chinese woman diagnosed with mild pneumonia who was returning from a trip to Wuhan.

On January 15 China's health commission says no human-to-human transmission of the virus behind the Wuhan outbreak has been confirmed so far, but the possibility "cannot be excluded".

The next day a first case of the virus is confirmed in Japan in someone who had stayed in Wuhan in early January.

US controls

On January 17, a second person, a 69-year-old man, dies in Wuhan, according to the authorities.

The same day, the CDC announces that it will begin screening passengers arriving from Wuhan at three airports: San Francisco, New York's JFK and Los Angeles.

Human to human transmission confirmed

On January 20, a third death and more than 100 new cases are announced in China, sparking concerns ahead of the annual Lunar New Year holiday which begins January 25 and sees hundreds of millions of Chinese people travel nationwide.

The virus is present in Beijing in the north, Shanghai in the east and Shenzhen in the south. More than 200 cases have been recorded. The virus is also detected in South Korea in a Chinese person who has arrived by plane from Wuhan.

China's President Xi Jinping says that the [virus](#) must be "resolutely contained", in his first public comments on the outbreak.

Human-to-human transmission is "affirmative", a top Chinese expert on infectious diseases Zhong Nanshan tells state broadcaster CCTV.

Trains, planes suspended from Wuhan

On January 22 European airports from London to Moscow step up checks on flights from Wuhan.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus says he is postponing a decision on whether or not to declare a global health emergency.

"I have decided to ask the emergency committee to meet again tomorrow to continue their discussion," he said, referring to a group of international experts who met for several hours at the WHO in Geneva on Wednesday.

As Chinese authorities say 17 people have died and more than 500 have been infected, air and rail departures from Wuhan are suspended from January 23.

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Citation: How the new coronavirus developed (2020, January 23) retrieved 22 January 2023 from https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-01-coronavirus_1.html

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