Spain virus toll hits 5 as infections jump

6 March 2020

A fifth person died from coronavirus in Spain on Friday as officials shuttered elderly care centres across Madrid after a spike in cases that has seen 374 people infected, the health authority said.

So far, all of the victims have been people in high-risk categories, elderly or suffering from a pre-existing condition, said Fernando Simon, the health ministry's chief coordinator for emergencies.

Over the past day, 111 new cases have been confirmed in the biggest single-day jump since the start of the epidemic.

The highest concentration of cases—137—is in Madrid and the surrounding area where health officials announced the closure of all centres catering for the elderly after discovering a flurry of infections in the past 24 hours, two of them fatal.

Health officials initially shuttered two day-care centres after a 99-year-old woman and a 76-year-old man died, but later extended the closure to all such facilities, both daycare and residential.

Spain reported its first coronavirus death on Tuesday evening, saying the victim had died on February 13 but was only diagnosed with COVID-19 during a post-mortem analysis in a development which has worried officials.

Since then the number has jumped to five.

These deaths "show that the virus arrived earlier than thought" in Spain, Antoni Trilla, head of preventative medicine and epidemiology at the Hospital Clinic of Barcelona, told El Pais newspaper.

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