



Published Date: 2020-01-03 16:23:59

Subject: PRO/AH/EDR> Undiagnosed pneumonia - China (HU) (02): updates, other country responses, RFI

Archive Number: 20200103.6869668

UNDIAGNOSED PNEUMONIA - CHINA (HUBEI) (02): UPDATES, OTHER COUNTRY RESPONSES, REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

A ProMED-mail post

<http://www.promedmail.org>

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[1] China (Wuhan city), increase in cases, etiology pending

Date: Fri 3 Jan 2020

Source: Globe and Mail/Reuters [edited]

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-health-authorities-seek-to-identify-cause-of-pneumonia-outbreak-in/>

Chinese health authorities are trying to identify what is causing an outbreak of pneumonia in the central city of Wuhan, officials said on Friday [3 Jan 2020], as the tally of cases rose to 44 and Singapore said it would screen

arrivals on flights from there.

Authorities this week said they were investigating 27 cases of infection after rumours on social media suggested the outbreak could be linked to severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS).

The World Health Organization (WHO) said it was aware of the reports, is monitoring the situation and is in contact with the Chinese government about it. "Investigations are still being carried out and authorities cannot yet confirm what pathogen is causing this illness," said WHO spokesman Tarik Jasarevic. He added that there are several potential causes of viral pneumonia, many of which are more common than SARS.

Chinese municipal health officials in Wuhan said in a statement on their website on Friday [3 Jan 2020] that they had ruled out common respiratory diseases, such as influenza, bird flu and adenovirus infection, as the cause.

Eleven of those infected were in critical condition and the rest stable, they said, adding that all had been isolated and doctors were observing 121 people with whom they had been in close contact.

Cleanup efforts at a seafood market where some victims were vendors have been completed, the city officials said, adding that no obvious human-to-human transmission had been seen and no medical staff had been infected.

On Friday [3 Jan 2020], Singapore's health ministry said it would begin temperature screening on passengers arriving on flights from Wuhan.

In 2003, Chinese officials covered up a SARS outbreak for weeks before a growing death toll and rumours forced the government to reveal the epidemic, apologize and vow full candour regarding future outbreaks.

The disease, which emerged in southern China late in 2002, spread rapidly to other cities and countries in 2003. More than 8000 people were infected and 775 died.

Wuhan police this week said they had summoned 8 people who "posted and forwarded false information online, causing adverse social impact."

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Communicated by:

ProMED-mail Rapporteur Kunihiko Iizuka

[2] Hong Kong letter to physicians - Center for Health Protection

Date: Fri 3 Jan 2020

Source: Hong Kong Center for Health Protection [edited]

https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/letters_to_doctors_20200103.pdf

[3 Jan 2020]

Dear Doctor,

Updates on the cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan of Mainland

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health writes to update you on the latest situation of the cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan of Hubei Province.

According to the latest information available from the National Health Commission (NHC) on [3 Jan 2020], there were a total of 44 pneumonia cases with unknown cause detected in Wuhan since December 2019 (as of 8 am, [3 Jan 2020]). Among them, 11 cases (25%) were in serious condition and the remaining cases were in stable condition. Symptoms were mainly fever while a few had presented with shortness of breath. All patients have been isolated and receiving treatment. Contact tracing has identified 121 close contacts and medical surveillance by the Wuhan health authority is ongoing. Epidemiological investigations revealed that some cases were persons working in the market called "South China Seafood City" [machine translation]. It remained unknown whether the other cases had epidemiological linkage to this market.

However, the NHC reported that no obvious human-to-human transmission has been observed and no healthcare workers have been infected for the time being. Influenza viruses, avian influenza viruses and other common respiratory pathogens like adenovirus have been excluded as the cause. The causative pathogen and cause of infection are still under investigation.

In light of the latest situation, the CHP has revised the reporting criteria today [3 Jan 2020] in order to widen the scope of surveillance. Please kindly report cases fulfilling the following updated reporting criteria to the CHP for prompt investigation:

- Patient presented with fever and acute respiratory illness, or with pneumonia; and
- Travel history to Wuhan within 14 days before onset of symptom (irrespective of any exposure to wet market or seafood market).

It is very important to obtain travel and exposure history from all patients presenting with fever and acute

respiratory symptoms. If you identify any cases fulfilling the above criteria, please report to the Central Notification Office (CENO) of the CHP via fax (2477 2770), phone (2477 2772) or CENO On-line (https://cdis.chp.gov.hk/CDIS_CENO_ONLINE/ceno.html). Please use the attached form (see Annex) for reporting.

Private doctors should call the Medical Control Officer (MCO) of the Department of Health at Pager 7116 3300 call 9179 when reporting any case. The CHP will make arrangement to transfer the patient to a public hospital for isolation, testing and treatment. While waiting for transfer, please isolate the patient to minimise contact/exposure to staff and other patients, and advise the patient to wear a surgical mask.

The CHP has set up a designated webpage (<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/102465.html>) to provide updated information and health advice. Information of the cases reported under the above enhanced surveillance will be updated on a daily basis on the above webpage.

We would also like to seek your assistance in providing health advice on personal and environmental hygiene to your patients. In particular, patients with respiratory symptoms are reminded to wear surgical masks.

We will closely monitor the situation and review the reporting criteria as appropriate. Please draw the attention of the healthcare professionals and supporting staff in your institution/working with you to the above. Thank you for your ongoing support in combating communicable diseases.

Yours faithfully,
(Dr. SK Chuang)
for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health

[The reporting form is available at the source URL (see Annex). - Mod.MPP]

[3] Singapore, Taiwan screening - media report

Date: Thu 2 Jan 2020; updated Fri 3 Jan 2020 at 06:20 EST

Source: Bloomberg News [edited]

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-01-03/pneumonia-outbreak-spurs-fever-checks-from-singapore-to-taiwan>

The cause of a mysterious lung infection in China continues to elude disease-trackers as the number of

reported cases in the outbreak climbs. As of Friday [3 Jan 2020], 44 people have been diagnosed with pneumonia, the cause of which is unknown, the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission said in a statement. That's up from 27 three days ago. Eleven are in serious condition.

The World Health Organization has been in touch the Chinese government and investigations are underway, though officials cannot yet confirm which pathogen is responsible, said spokesman Tarik Jasarevic in Geneva.

Singapore's Ministry of Health said temperature screening will be implemented at Changi Airport for all travelers arriving from the central Chinese city of Wuhan. In Hong Kong, thermal imaging systems will be deployed as part of increased fever surveillance at boundary check points, authorities said. Taiwan has implemented similar measures, its Centers for Disease Control said Tuesday [31 Dec 2019].

Pathogen studies have ruled out common respiratory diseases, including influenza, avian flu and adenovirus infections, Wuhan health authorities said. Some of those with pneumonia worked at a fresh seafood and produce market in the city. All the patients are being treated under quarantine, according to the commission.

The market, which has since been closed, sold birds, pheasants, and snakes, along with organs of rabbits and other wildlife, the University of Minnesota's Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy said Thursday [2 Jan 2020], citing media reports. That's triggered worries about the potential jump of an unknown virus to humans -- reminiscent of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), which killed almost 800 people about 17 years ago. The Wuhan Institute of Virology didn't respond to an emailed request for comment on the infectious source.

Several people were arrested for circulating fake news online about the viral spread of pneumonia, provincial authorities said, adding that rumors on social media alleging that there had been an outbreak of SARS are untrue, and no person-to-person transmission has been found so far.

Three travelers from Wuhan were admitted to hospitals in Hong Kong, though 2 were subsequently released, the South China Morning Post reported late Thursday [2 Jan 2020]. The city hasn't received any Wuhan-related severe pneumonia cases, Secretary for Food and Health Sophia Chan told reporters Thursday.

Singapore asked doctors to look out for suspected cases of pneumonia among people who have recently returned from Wuhan. "Suspect cases with fever and acute respiratory illness or pneumonia and with travel history to Wuhan within 14 days before onset of symptoms will be isolated as a precautionary measure to prevent transmission," the city-state's Ministry of Health said in a Facebook post.

[Byline: Jason Gale]

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Communicated by:

ProMED-mail

<promed@promedmail.org>

[4] Vietnam response to outbreak - media report

Date: Fri 3 Jan 2020

Source: VN Express [edited]

<https://e.vnexpress.net/news/news/vietnam-wary-as-china-pneumonia-outbreak-could-be-linked-to-sars-4036786.html>

The Vietnamese Ministry of Health is closely monitoring the situation on the China border following news of a pneumonia outbreak in that country.

China has reported several cases of acute pneumonia in Hubei Province's Wuhan City, 1500 km (932 mi) northeast of the border, since December [2019], according to the ministry's General Department of Preventative Medicine.

As of Tuesday [31 Dec 2019], 27 cases have been confirmed, with 7 people reportedly in critical condition, it added. The Chinese Ministry of Health is investigating the source of the infection and seeks to contain the outbreak.

There is no clear evidence yet that it has been transmitted between humans, with preliminary tests indicating it is an outbreak of viral pneumonia, according to the Vietnamese department. The Vietnamese Ministry of Health is collaborating with the World Health Organization to keep its citizens updated on the situation and devise preventive measures.

The outbreak is suspected to be linked to severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), which emerged in China in 2002 and spread to other countries, including Vietnam, in 2003, Chinese media reported. More than 8000 people were infected and 775 died.

[Byline: Phan Anh]

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Communicated by:

ProMED-mail Rapporteur Kunihiro Iizuka

[Well, we are still in the speculation stage. We do know that there are more cases that have been identified, but we do not know how many of these individuals have known contact/time spent in the seafood market. We also now know that avian influenza, influenza, and adenovirus have been eliminated. We do not know if a SARS-like coronavirus has been identified, albeit there have been numerous unsubstantiated reports mentioning a novel coronavirus that is SARS-like. A Twitter thread mentioned a report from the lab in Wuhan saying such a virus had been identified. We also heard from a reliable source that there was a SARS-like coronavirus identified, and most recently a Hong Kong media report (in Chinese/machine translated) mentions a novel coronavirus has been identified (see <https://hk.news.appledaily.com/local/realtime/article/20200103/60448286>). The prolonged silence on the official laboratory findings is being used to support the rumors that it is a novel virus as yet not fully sequenced...

The response on the part of other countries and locations that were early receivers of imported cases of SARS (Vietnam, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan) is impressive.

So again I close this moderator comment asking for more information on the epidemiology of the known cases and the laboratory results/findings on the identified cases.

A map of China showing locations of major cities in China can be found at <https://www.chinadiscovery.com/china-maps/city-maps.html>. - Mod.MPP

HealthMap/ProMED-mail map:

Hubei Province, China: <http://healthmap.org/promed/p/340>]

See Also

Undiagnosed pneumonia - China (HU) (01): wildlife sales, market closed, RFI 20200102.6866757
2019

Undiagnosed pneumonia - China (HU): RFI 20191230.6864153

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