

Pressure builds on China to share info on new coronavirus

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On Twitter and other forums, pressure is growing on China to share genetic sequences and other details about the new coronavirus implicated this week in an unexplained pneumonia outbreak in Wuhan.

So far, the only official announcements on cases came from Wuhan's health commission, which hasn't released any updates since Jan 5. The announcement of preliminary identification of a new coronavirus have come mainly from tightly controlled Chinese media reports quoting Chinese scientists close to the investigation.

On Jan 9, the World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed the basic facts based on information from China and said over the coming weeks, more comprehensive information is needed to understand the dynamics of the outbreak and the patients' clinical symptoms.

Concerned global health officials

A handful of countries in Asia have identified sick travelers coming from Wuhan, though none have been linked to the city's pneumonia cluster, which authorities have traced to a now-shuttered seafood market that also sold live animals and meat from wildlife.

Though Chinese authorities have said human-to-human transmission isn't a feature of the new disease, global health officials are nervous, given Wuhan's population of 11 million people and the outbreak coming just ahead a heavy travel season connected to the upcoming Lunar New Year holiday.

Also, the outbreak is occurring against the backdrop of the winter uptick in respiratory virus illnesses such as colds and flu, and health officials are eager know how to test for the new virus.



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Skyline of Wuhan, China.

Rumors are swirling in the scientific community that Chinese researchers are preparing medical journal articles for submission. Jeremy Farrar, MD, PhD, director of Wellcome Trust, said on Twitter today that if the rumors are true and critical health information isn't being shared immediately with the WHO, "something is very wrong." Another Twitter user pointed out that the virus has reportedly been fully sequenced and the team from China should have already shared it on GenBank.

Others commenting in the thread, however, pointed out the problem isn't unique to China, with similar calls for more timely data sharing made in the early days of other emerging outbreaks, such as Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) and Ebola virus in West Africa.

More details on clinical symptoms

Meanwhile, a few new details about the patients' illnesses came today from Hu Ke, a member of the treatment team who was quoted in CN Healthcare, an online healthcare media portal. FluTrackers, an infectious disease news message board, translated and posted the report.

Hu said most patients have mild-to-moderate disease, some have been discharged, and most are in stable condition. The main symptoms are fever, fatigue, and a dry cough. Some experience breathing problems as the disease worsens.

Lab tests in early illness showed normal or decreasing white blood cell counts, decreased lymphocytes, with elevated liver and muscle enzymes in some patients.

Chest x-rays showed that all patients had pneumonia with multiple ground glassy exudates seen in the lungs.

European groups issue risk assessment, guidance

Elsewhere, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) yesterday posted its first risk assessment on the Wuhan novel coronavirus outbreak, based on limited information.

It notes that three European Union airports have direct flights to Wuhan, with indirect flights at other hubs.

"Considering there is no indication of human-to-human transmission and no cases detected outside of China, the likelihood of introduction to the EU is considered to be low, but cannot be excluded," it said, adding that more epidemiological and lab information is needed to do a comprehensive risk assessment.

Public Health England (PHE) today also weighed in today, saying the risk to the United Kingdom population is very low and the threat to travelers to Wuhan is low. It urged people to take simple precautions such as observing good hand and personal hygiene.

The PHE also posted guidance on the initial investigation of possible Wuhan-related cases and

infection prevention for the new coronavirus.

See also:

Jan 10 Jeremy Farrar [tweet](https://twitter.com/JeremyFarrar/status/1215647022893670401) (<https://twitter.com/JeremyFarrar/status/1215647022893670401>)

FluTrackers [thread](https://flutrackers.com/forum/forum/china-other-health-threats/china-emerging-diseases-other-health-threats/821830-china-59-undiagnosed-viral-pneumonia-cases-in-wuhan-hubei-province-december-30-2019-influenza-sars-mers-ruled-out-novel-coronavirus-detected/page10) (<https://flutrackers.com/forum/forum/china-other-health-threats/china-emerging-diseases-other-health-threats/821830-china-59-undiagnosed-viral-pneumonia-cases-in-wuhan-hubei-province-december-30-2019-influenza-sars-mers-ruled-out-novel-coronavirus-detected/page10>)

Jan 9 ECDC [risk assessment](https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/pneumonia-cases-possibly-associated-novel-coronavirus-wuhan-china) (<https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/pneumonia-cases-possibly-associated-novel-coronavirus-wuhan-china>)

Jan 10 PHE [press release](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-and-avian-flu-advice-for-travel-to-china?utm_source=d2c19626-5ae6-48b7-9177-a3d776d61894&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate) (https://www.gov.uk/government/news/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-and-avian-flu-advice-for-travel-to-china?utm_source=d2c19626-5ae6-48b7-9177-a3d776d61894&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate)

Jan 10 PHE [guidance on initial investigation of possible cases](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-initial-investigation-of-possible-cases) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-initial-investigation-of-possible-cases>)

Jan 10 PHE [guidance on infection prevention](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control>)

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