

Emerging Respiratory Virus Bulletin – January 20, 2020

Dear Colleagues -

Update RE: RECENT MARKED INCREASE IN 2019 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (2019-nCoV) CASES

There has been a marked increase in the number of confirmed 2019-nCoV cases in the past few days, mostly from Wuhan but including cases in other cities of China and elsewhere, distributed as listed below. Note that the situation is changing quickly and the tallies below are based on understanding as of moments ago but are subject to change. Suspect cases or those still under investigation are not included in the tallies below.

SITUATION REPORT:

China: 233 confirmed cases, 3 deaths

Beijing - 5 cases

Wuhan, Hubei province - 213 cases

Huizhou, Guangdong province - 1 case

Shanghai, - 1 case

Shenzhen, Guangdong province - 9 cases

Zhuhai, Guangdong province - 3 cases

Zhanjiang, Guangdong province - 1 case

Imported cases: 4 confirmed cases, 0 deaths

Japan: 1 case

South Korea: 1 case

Thailand: 2 unconnected cases

As for any infectious disease, a spectrum of illness is included in the above reports with most considered mild-moderate but a subset experiencing more critical illness. There have been 3 deaths reported from China, involving older adult males all with underlying comorbidity. A full clinical and epidemiological summary is still pending.

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Reported cases include those without any animal market exposure, with confirmed cases among health care workers (n=15) now also recognized amongst the tally in Wuhan. The number of involved health care facilities is unclear at this time.

RISK ASSESSMENT:

An increase in case counts is not unexpected and current reports do not indicate that 2019-nCoV has become a community-level threat. The ease and extent of human-to-human transmission has still to be determined.

The goal of the public health response to this emerging respiratory virus remains early detection and containment until otherwise advised. The World Health Organization is convening an Emergency Committee on the 2019-nCoV under the International Health Regulations on January 22, 2020.

At this time, the overall risk to Canadians is considered low. Canada has a number of standard border measures in place to prevent the introduction and spread of communicable diseases into Canada.

Planned additional measures to be implemented over the coming week include messaging on arrivals screens at the Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver international airports reminding travelers from Wuhan to inform a border service officer if they are experiencing flu-like symptoms, and an additional health screening question to be added to electronic kiosks.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendations for British Columbians have not changed, but are reinforced by these recent events and may be especially important given upcoming Chinese New Year celebrations, also known as the Spring Festival, beginning January 25, 2020.

In particular:

1. Travelers should consult the Public Health Agency of Canada health notice which reminds travellers to follow usual health precautions while abroad (including avoidance of live animals and animal markets, animal droppings or uncooked animal products) and to notify their health care provider of their travel history if they become ill after returning to Canada, see: <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories/pneumonia-china>

2. To facilitate early detection and containment, clinicians should notify their local Medical Health Officer, Infection Control Practitioner and/or Medical Microbiologist as soon as possible about patients presenting with:
 - Fever and acute respiratory illness, with or without pneumonia AND
 - Recent travel to Wuhan, China within 14 days prior to symptom onset OR
 - Another potential relevant exposure (e.g. close contact with someone who was ill and had recently travelled to Wuhan)

Such patients should be managed with contact and droplet precautions (including eye protection); additional precautions including N95 respirators should be used during aerosol-generating procedures, including nasopharyngeal or bronchoscopy specimen collection

The BCCDC Public Health Laboratory (PHL) has developed laboratory guidance for 2019-nCoV diagnostic testing. Such testing requires notification and consultation with the local Medical Health Officer and the BCCDC PHL Medical Microbiologist on-call (604-661-7033).

We will update you further as more information becomes available.