

COVID 19 : A Perspective on a Pandemic

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Introduction

The past few weeks has been a stressful time for the global community as we deal with a siege of magnitude proportions by a virus which has disrupted lives and continues to do so.

In brief “the virus “SARS-CoV-2” and the disease it causes has been named “coronavirus disease 2019” (abbreviated “COVID-19”). “belongs to Coronaviruses which belongs large family of viruses that are found common in people and many different species of animals, including camels, cattle, cats, and bats.”¹

Categorization as Pandemic

On March 11 the World Health Organization declared that the spread of COVID-19 should be characterized as a pandemic. In the words of the WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, “Pandemic is not a word to use lightly or carelessly. It is a word that, if misused, can cause unreasonable fear, or unjustified acceptance that the fight is over, leading to unnecessary suffering and death...We cannot say this loudly enough, or clearly enough, or often enough: all countries can still change the course of this pandemic.”²

This announcement has resulted in widespread panic and fear worldwide. On March 13th according to a press by CNN the number of cases worldwide are 125,000.

Transmission

The coronavirus spreads through droplet infection, ie when they cough or sneeze and the portal of entry to the body via one’s mouth, eyes and nose. It can spread from contact with fomites (inanimate objects) on which the virus can live for days.

For example, according to recent reports by WHO and researches from University of Tennessee

Here’s a rundown of how long COVID-19 is estimated to live on other surfaces:

- Plastered wall: 36 hours
- Formica (the laminate material on countertops): 36 hours
- Plastic: 72 hours

- Stainless steel: 72 hours
- Mobile phone surfaces if on glass for 96 hours and if the virus is on the phone it can stay for 4 days at room temperature.

Precautions

1. According to many health experts the practice of hand washing for 20 seconds with soap is highly effective. Recommendation is to scrub beneath fingernails, and cover the entire hand, wrist and arm.

2. Wash your hands after using the bathroom, before eating and after you sneeze or cough and blow your nose and before you touch your face and if travelling using public transport when you arrive at your destination.

3. Wipe down your phone as soon as possible. (follow instructions on apple and Samsung websites for directions)

4. Wipe down your bag as soon as possible.

5. Wear disposable gloves when using public transportation or going shopping.

6. Clean counter and table surfaces and, doorknobs and car handles daily.

7. Limit physical contact with other people and try to avoid crowded places and non-essential travel. If options are available, try to work remotely. Maintain social distance is crucial ie being 2 arm's length away from people when speaking to them.

8. If unwell use a mask, if healthy it is not necessary to wear a mask unless caring for a sick person, then the recommendation is to use a N95 mask instead of a surgical mask as it gives better protection. Before using a mask clean your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based sanitizer.

9. If you or any family member presents with a dry hacking cough, chest pain, breathlessness, fever or chills please seek medical assistance at the earliest.

Tips

In case there is a shortage of sanitizers and disinfectants in your area, you can make these cleaning supplies by following the steps outlined below .

Add 1 cup of water to 2 cups of 100% Isopropyl alcohol and the solution can be used as a disinfectant.

Alternately mixing 2 cups of bleach with 5 gallons of cold water is also an effective cleaning solution

Recommendations

1. Take precautions, be positive, social isolation does not mean you can't talk to people over the phone, face time or internet.
2. If you can take contact your neighbors and others in the community who are infirm, have special needs be supportive in any way you can
3. We need to reach out and be united and work as a global community to move forward at present and aftermath of the crisis

Useful links to more information

1. Travel bans, restrictions in place by many countries. For a detailed list please click on the following link. <https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/coronavirus-travel-bans/index.html>
2. Rationale for politicians and global stakeholders to act now
<https://medium.com/@tomaspueyo/coronavirus-act-today-or-people-will-die-f4d3d9cd99ca>
3. Letter from President of UNGA to member states about COVID- 19
<https://www.un.org/pga/74/2020/03/11/covid-19-letter-to-member-states/>
4. Link for latest global prevalence of COVID 19 cases.
<https://infographics.channelnewsasia.com/covid-19/map.html>

COVID19: Identifying the symptoms

Symptoms	Covid-19 Symptoms range from mild to severe	Cold Gradual onset of symptoms	Flu Abrupt onset of symptoms
 Fever	Common	Rare	Common
 Fatigue	Sometimes	Sometimes	Common
 Cough	Common (usually dry)	Mild	Common (usually dry)
 Sneezing	No	Common	No
 Aches and pains	Sometimes	Common	Common
 Runny or stuffy nose	Rare	Common	Sometimes
 Sore throat	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes
 Diarrhea	Rare	No	Sometimes for children
 Headaches	Sometimes	Rare	Common
 Shortness of breath	Sometimes	No	No

References

1. Centers for Disease Control (2020) . Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/summary.html> . Accessed March 13, 2020.
2. World Health Organization (2020) . Rolling updates on COVID 19
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/events-as-they-happen>
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