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OUTBREAK OF THE 2019 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (2019-NCOV)

About coronaviruses

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). Coronaviruses are zoonotic, meaning they are transmitted between animals and people.

A novel coronavirus is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans. The 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) is a virus identified as the cause of an outbreak of respiratory illness first detected in Wuhan, China. Early on, many of the patients in the outbreak in Wuhan, China reportedly had some link to a large seafood and animal market, suggesting animal-to-person spread. However, a growing number of patients reportedly have not had exposure to animal markets, which indicates that person-to-person spread is occurring.

Transmission

Since this novel coronavirus was only recently identified, there is currently limited information regarding the modes of transmission, clinical features and severity of the disease. Human coronaviruses most commonly spread from an infected person to others through:

- The air by coughing and sneezing
- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands
- Faecal contamination (rarely).

Signs and symptoms

There is limited information regarding the clinical features and the severity of the disease at this stage. For confirmed 2019-nCoV infections, reported illnesses have ranged from infected people with little to no symptoms to people being severely ill and even dying. Symptoms can include fever, cough and shortness of breath. Symptoms may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 after exposure.

Treatment

People who think they may have been exposed to 2019-nCoV should contact their healthcare providers immediately.

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Prevention

The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus.

Reducing exposure

There are certain steps you can take to reduce your exposure to 2019-nCoV:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser.
- Cover your mouth and nose with your flexed elbow or a tissue. Throw the tissue away immediately and wash hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are frequently touched.
- Avoid close contact with anyone who has a fever and cough.
- Seek medical care early and share your previous travel history with your healthcare provider, especially if you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing.
- When visiting animal markets in areas currently experiencing cases of novel coronavirus, avoid direct unprotected contact with live animals and surfaces in contact with animals.
- Avoid the consumption of raw or undercooked animal products. Handle raw meat, milk or animal organs with care to avoid cross-contamination with uncooked foods.
- Avoid travel if you have a fever and cough. If you become sick while using public transport, inform the personnel and seek medical care early.

Dealing with suspected cases

Any person with the following risk factors should be investigated and tested for 2019-nCoV:

- Severe acute respiratory illness (SARI), presenting with fever ($\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$) or history of fever and cough with pneumonia or acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) requiring admission to hospital.
- A documented travel history to Wuhan, Hubei Province in China within 14 days before symptom onset.
- Close physical contact with a confirmed patient with 2019-nCoV while they are symptomatic. Close contact includes the following:
 - Providing direct care for 2019-nCoV patients
 - Being exposed to healthcare workers infected with 2019-nCoV
 - Visiting patients or staying in the same close environment as someone infected with 2019-nCoV
 - Working in close proximity to someone infected with 2019-nCoV
 - Sharing the same classroom environment with someone infected with 2019-nCoV
 - Travelling with someone infected with 2019-nCoV in any mode of transport
 - Living in the same household as someone infected with nCoV

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- Exposure to patients with severe acute respiratory infections, unless another cause has been identified to explain the clinical presentation.
- Exposure to a healthcare facility in a country where hospital-associated 2019-nCoV infections have been reported.

Travelling to countries with reported confirmed cases

Based on the information currently available, the World Health Organization (WHO) advises that measures to limit the risk of exportation or importation of the disease should be implemented, without unnecessary restrictions of international traffic. No travel or trade restrictions with China have been recommended by the WHO, but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends avoiding non-essential travel to China. The necessary precautionary measures should apply during travel.

Medical aid benefits for confirmed cases of 2019-nCoV

Benefits for both in-hospital and out-of-hospital care will apply according to the different plan types.

Please contact Anglo Medical Aid Scheme on 0860 222 633 for more information.