


Are we ready for the new fatal Coronavirus: scenario of Pakistan?

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Novel Coronavirus in China

In recent days, a novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) has posed an emergency of international concerns. Hundreds of 2019-nCoV cases have been reported in the central city of Wuhan and other provinces of China. As of 24:00 on February 03, 2020, according to the National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China has reported 20,438 confirmed cases of 2019-nCoV and 425 deaths as described in Figure 1. The mortality rate was 2.08% (425/20,438). In addition, confirmed cases of 2019-nCoV had been reported in the special administrative regions of China (Hong Kong and Macao) and Taiwan province. Thousands of people are being screened, and the suspected patients are being admitted to the hospital for observation. The city is banned for public transportation and other activities to assure quick control of this recent deadly outbreak. So far, a total of 221,015 close contacts of 2019-nCoV have been traced and 171,329 individuals are kept under medical observation.¹

The new coronavirus jumped out from China, and cases have been reported in other parts of the world including Japan (20), Thailand (19), Singapore (18), Hong Kong (15), South Korea (15), Australia (12), Germany (12), United States (11), Macau (10), Malaysia (10), Taiwan (10), Vietnam (08), France (06), United Arab Emirates (05), Canada (04), India (03), Italy (02), Russia (02), Philippines (02), United Kingdom (02), Cambodia (01), Finland (01), Nepal (01), Spain (01), Sweden (01), and Sri Lanka (01) as described in Figure 2. The reported cases outside of China had linked traveling history to China.²

Scenario of Pakistan

Pakistan, is the most affected countries, has experienced many diseases outbreaks and other disasters. Geographically and politically China and Pakistan are closely connected as shown

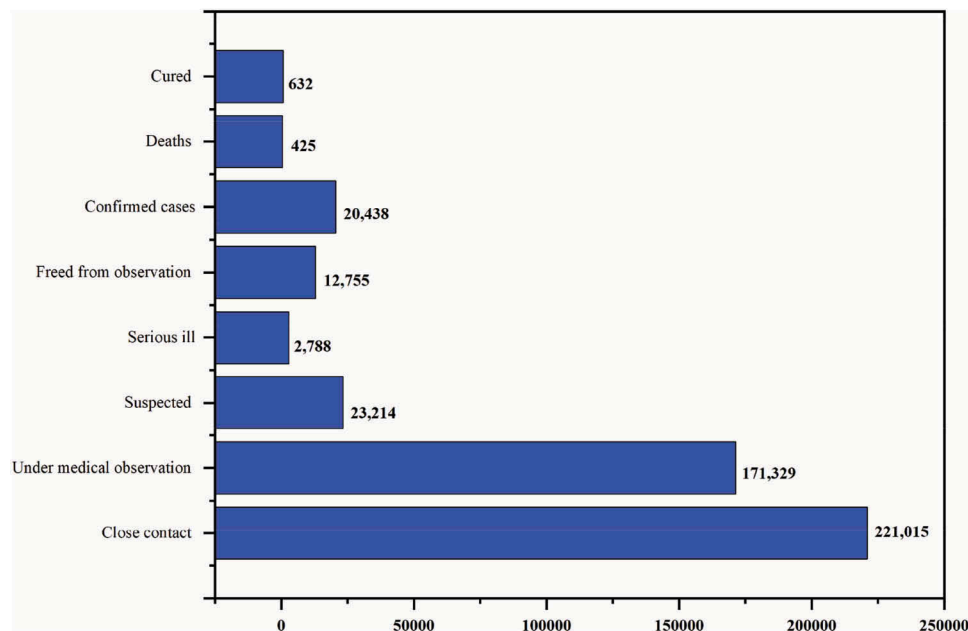


Figure 1. The statistics of recent 2019-nCoV cases in China (as of February 03, 2020).

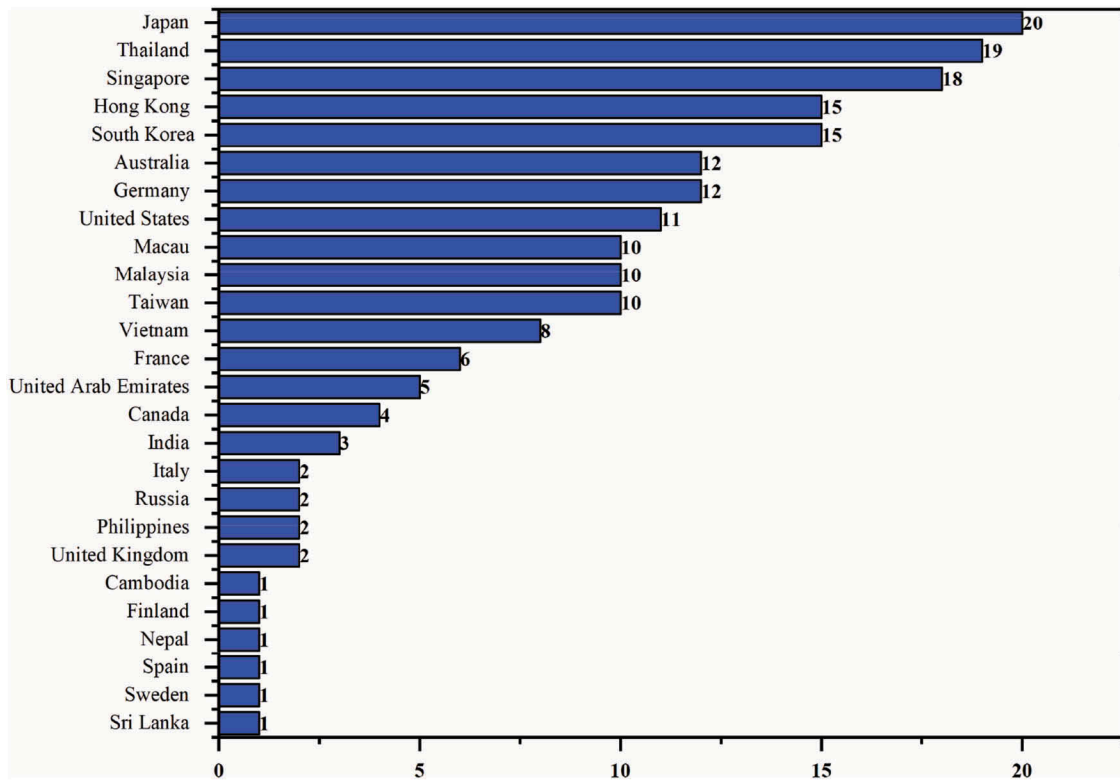


Figure 2. Number of cases reported in different countries outside China (as of 04 February 2020, 5:00 PM Beijing Time).



Figure 3. Map of Asia; Pakistan and China marked with different colors green and red respectively (Source: Modified from mapchart.net).

in **Figure 3**. A large number of Chinese people are working in Pakistan on different developmental projects (China Pakistan Economic Corridor, Dams, Gawdar Port), and on the other hand many Pakistanis are residing in China carrying out their studies, business and jobs. The outbreak of coronavirus has appeared during the peak travel time when the Chinese from Pakistan and around the world are traveling to China, while the Pakistani community, especially students, are traveling back to Pakistan due to winter break. One of such case has been reported on 24 January 2020 after a person traveled from China to Pakistan on 21 January 2020 via Dubai and was diagnosed for 2019-nCoV on 24 January.³ However, the case was not notified officially by the government of Pakistan. In the depicted situation, the future is very alarming. After the ending of Chinese New Year celebrations, the Chinese will travel back to their jobs abroad, which may result in an outbreak of the fatal virus infection in Pakistan and other countries.

The question is, does Pakistan prepared for any 2019-nCoV cases or outbreak?

In light of the published literature, in Pakistan, many diseases are prevalent including endemic and epidemic diseases, emerging infections, and an increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases.⁴

Although the National Health Institute (NIH) in the Ministry of Health Pakistan has issued warnings to be conscious of the 2019-nCoV, resource-limited countries are not as active and well-prepared to control any trauma associated with the new deadly 2019-nCoV. If new cases are not diagnosed and treated on time, this may result in a crisis by

increasing the number of new cases and the death toll in countries like Pakistan. There clearly is a pressing need to develop an effective 2019-nCoV vaccine as soon as possible.

Disclosure of potential conflicts of interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This work was supported by Chinese National Natural Fund [81573258]; Jiangsu Provincial Six Talent Peak [WSN-002]. The funder had no role in study design, data collection and manuscript writing .

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