

COVID-19: An Ongoing Global Epidemic of Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV/SARS-CoV-2) Infection

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In December 2019, SARS-CoV-2 (severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2), a novel coronavirus provisionally known as 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV), has been emerged in Wuhan (Hubei province, China) causing outbreak of COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) [1]. The 2019-nCoV, which is genetically different from two previously reported human-infecting β -coronaviruses: SARS-CoV (severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus) and MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus), has been considered as a new β -coronavirus and named as SARS-CoV-2 (subgenus: Sarbecovirus) [2,3].

An initial cluster of infected (with SARS-CoV-2) cases, experiencing symptoms, such as fever, dry cough, dyspnea, and fatigue with headache, were epidemiologically linked to the seafood market (Huanan, China), and the virus was suggested to be of bat origin [4,5]. The World Health Organization recognised the COVID-19 outbreak as PHEIC (public health emergency of international concern) since the disease was out of control and disseminated to countries outside China, making a global epidemic, which is ongoing with person-to-person transmission, though initially it was a zoonotic spill over of SARS-CoV-2 from animals [4-6]. As of March 4, 2020, this ongoing epidemic recorded 80,565 confirmed cases and 3,015 deaths in China, and spread to 85 countries reporting 14,768 cases and 267 deaths, wherein India registered 29 confirmed cases [7].

The major complications of SARS-CoV-2 infection include acute respiratory distress syndrome, multi-organ dysfunction and shock leading to death; however, asymptomatic cases, with capacity to spreading the virus, have been recorded. The severity of COVID-19 is less than that of both MERS and SARS, but is more contagious with high transmissibility (reproductive number, R_0 : 2.2) [8]. Currently, however, there is no vaccine against the COVID-19 causing virus, SARS-CoV-2, and no specific antiviral agents have been ap-

proved to treat the disease. Still there is hope to curb the virus [9], and there is indication for the development and discovery of anti-COVID-19 drugs, and vaccines against the disease, as well [10,11].

Therefore, we have to go with caution and concern rather than with unnecessary panic for COVID-19 to be controlled rather than to be worsened.

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