

## 2019-nCoV Outbreak Declared as Public Health Emergency of International Concern: What Next?

Dear Editor,

The 2019-novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) outbreak, which initially originated in Wuhan, has rapidly spread to all the provinces of China and has been declared as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) based on the recommendations of the emergency committee on 30 January 2020.<sup>[1]</sup> This has been recommended owing to the significant rise in the number of cases and detection of cases in various nations other than China.<sup>[2]</sup> Although 99% of the reported cases are from China, the cases of the disease have been detected in 24 other nations by the first week of February 2020.<sup>[2]</sup> These facts are quite alarming and suggest that the disease has been spreading at a rapid pace globally and there is an immense need to take urgent measures to contain the disease.<sup>[2]</sup>

The declaration of the disease as PHEIC should be looked upon as an opportunity and also as a global need for coordinated efforts from all the nations and the sectors to not only contain the outbreak in China but also to improve the level of preparedness in other parts of the world. After this declaration, China should implement a holistic risk communication plan to periodically inform people about the progression of the disease, prevention strategies, and the range of facilities available to contain the outbreak.<sup>[1]</sup>

For all other nations, it is a reminder that the disease can appear in any nation and thus the national leaders should prepare themselves for the containment of the infection which essentially includes strengthening of active surveillance, prompt detection of cases, measures to isolate and treat cases, perform contact tracing, and implement measures to reduce the subsequent transmission in their settings.<sup>[2]</sup> At present, there are no restrictions on trade or travel and every nation should strictly implement the international health regulations at the airport and seaport without compromising the routine travelers. Besides, all the nations should ensure that stigma or discrimination should be discouraged against the disease in any forum.<sup>[1]</sup>

However, we have to invest in the research front for the production of the vaccine, therapeutic options, assess the

possibility of the animal origin of the outbreak, understand the clinical spectrum, and the extent of transmission among humans both in healthcare establishment and community settings. At the same time, it is important to remember that even the earlier outbreak of similar coronavirus has been difficult to contain and thus it is the time to work in collaboration and cooperate to contain the disease.<sup>[1,2]</sup>

In conclusion, the declaration of the 2019-nCoV outbreak as a PHEIC is a step to act in a more coordinated manner and implement measures to be more prepared to respond to the potential emergence of cases and there is nothing to be afraid or spread fear among the community.

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### Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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