

## **COVID 19 - the deadly disease that sparked a global turmoil**

**By Prof. Vince Sinining<sup>1</sup>**

Early in December of 2019, a mysterious virus emerged in Wuhan - a sprawling capital of Central China's Hubei province. A mega city that contains many lakes and parks, including expansive, picturesque East Lake. It is the second largest city to host many universities in China. A city of roughly 11 million people, it is considered the political, economic, financial, commercial, cultural and educational center of Central China. It is also a major transportation hub, with dozens of railways, roads and expressways passing through the city and connecting to other major cities.

Wuhan is now known worldwide as the city where the outbreak of the worldwide pandemic of COVID-19, or corona virus, has originated which has spread throughout the world and has a devastating impact, socially and economically, among the many countries that are affected by the virus.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines COVID-19 as an infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. Coronavirus is a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

Doctors in Wuhan began exchanging messages on a group WeChat about the mysterious virus that they have suspected it originated in the seafood and wildlife market in Wuhan. In a TV interview, Prof. Raina Macintyre, head of Biosecurity Program at UNSW Kirby Institute said that the virus has possibly transmitted from touching contaminated meat of wildlife animals that spread to the first cluster of humans.

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Doctors at Wuhan sounded the alarm through their WeChat group and thought at first the reoccurrence of SARS. Experts said that the mode of transmission of the virus is droplet transmission at close range or contact with respiratory secretion of patients. This can cause a special pneumonia that is evidently contagious and capable of affecting multiple organ systems. The virus is also called SARS – a type of corona virus that killed 774 people in 2002-2003.

Mary Hu, in her March 18 2020 article at <https://qz.com> wrote that COVID-19 started out as the “Wuhan virus. Then it was the “Wuhan coronavirus” and “China coronavirus,” and subsequently 2019-nCoV. Finally, on Feb. 11, the World Health Organization (WHO) gave the disease an official name: Covid-19.

Hu continued to explain clearly the name Covid-19. “Co” refers to corona, “vi” to virus, and “d” to disease. The virus that causes the disease is SARS-CoV-2, which was named by the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses. The “SARS” part of the name refers to the new coronavirus’ genetic link to the virus that caused the 2003 SARS outbreak. So one tests positive for SARS-CoV-2, not Covid-19, as it’s the virus and not the disease that does the infecting.

In just a short period of two months, COVID-19 spread worldwide with 78,811 cases and 2,462 deaths reported by February 23, 2020. WHO warned that COVID-19 could pose a global threat than terrorism and can have more devastating consequences than any terrorist action.

The latest update worldwide as of 30 March 2020 from <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/> show 764,992 cases with 36,867 deaths and 160,148 recovered.

As of 30 March 2020, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in the USA reported a total case of 140,904 and deaths of 2,405.



The devastation wrought by the COVID-19 outbreak is not only evident in the skyrocketing number of cases reported, but it is also evident in the falling prices in stock markets around the world, as well as its devastating impact on the global economy.

Professor Alessandro Rebucci of the Carey Business School said that "Overall, COVID-19 represents a large negative-productivity shock, imparted on an economy that was creating lots of jobs but not very productive ones." He continued to say that "Uncertainty induces people to postpone spending and businesses to defer or scrap investment plans. This abates demand. Lower output means lower income. Lower income means lower spending, which means unemployment and sinking profits. We are in a doom loop, unfortunately."

Experts viewed COVID-19 to cause a large negative-productivity shock. The disease and its economic impact will hit hardest on the weakest and the poorest. Governments around the world are scrambling to think about how to support their communities.

The Post reported that the European Central Bank announced an \$820 billion emergency bond-buying program. In the United States, congress and President Donald Trump have enacted a historic \$2 trillion stimulus bill to address the dramatic economic crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

COVID-19 has not spread as widely in Africa as it has in Europe and in the United States. But the virus is in 40 African countries with 4,760 cases; 146 deaths, and 335 recoveries as of March 30, 2020 as reported by [www.africanews.com](http://www.africanews.com) — and experts worry that health-care systems in many places do not have the latest tools and capacity to deal with a devastating outbreak.

Director John Nkengason of the Africa Center for Disease Control warned in a news conference that the continent is “very likely” to see a rise in rates of coronavirus infection because many cases are going unreported or untested.



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In a separate news briefing, World Health Organization South Africa Representative Owen Kaluwa said that while all the initial cases in Africa were among travelers from abroad, mainly Europe, some countries are seeing swift rises in local transmission.

Matshidiso Moeti, WHO regional director for Africa, and Lucile Imboua-Niava, WHO Senegal representative, said at the same news conference that along with limited tests and hospital supplies, poor communities face a confluence of barriers to mitigating the virus.

Africa's COVID-19 free countries as of March 30, 2020 as reported by [www.africanews.com](http://www.africanews.com) are: Lesotho, Comoros, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Burundi, Botswana, Sao Tome and Principe, and Malawi.

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