

EMSA Press Release on COVID-19

March 2nd, 2020

On December 27th, 2019, three patients were admitted to hospital with severe pneumonia in Wuhan, China. This event was followed by the detection of a new virus, which later, Chinese authorities identified as a beta coronavirus related to SARS and MERS or as it was subsequently named by the World Health Organisation (WHO), COVID-19. After the impressive quick action of public health authorities, *the European Medical Students' Association (EMSA) has been closely observing the issue until now.*

With over 87,137 confirmed cases globally and a death toll exceeding 2,800 at the time of writing, there are rising global concerns about a possible epidemic crisis. *58 countries are affected so far, and with the addition of three new European Member States, the Outbreak has already reached Europe.**

COVID-19;

- Can be transmitted human-to-human, with a higher risk of infection from face-to-face contact for approximately 15 minutes.
- The median age of cases is 49 years.
- The virus becomes symptomatic 3-6 days after contraction, with symptoms hard to distinguish from those of the common flu; fever, cough, fatigue.
- Less common symptoms include sputum production, headaches, coughing blood and the likely course of the medical condition gets worse within a week with shortness of breath.
- Therefore, treatment in hospital is necessary.

Following WHO's recommendations, *we would like to remind medical students, healthcare professionals and the society of Europe to;*

- Clean hands frequently by using alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.
- Cover mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing, the tissue has to be thrown away immediately, and hands should be washed right after.
- Avoid close contact with anyone who has a fever and cough.
- Seek medical care early if one has a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, and share previous travel history with the healthcare provider.

Furthermore, as the voice of future European medical doctors with particular attention to ethical values, EMSA is highly concerned about rising discrimination against the Chinese community across Europe. Upon reaching Europe, the Outbreak brought along with it unprecedented and uncalled-for prejudice. A relatively successful attempt to battle this tide of discrimination is a social-media campaign in France, using the hashtag #JeNeSuisPasUnVirus (“I am not a virus”), which has inspired hundreds to share their own experiences of racially-motivated exclusion and impoliteness. **The fact that viruses cannot target people from specific populations, ethnicities, or racial backgrounds should not be forgotten.**

EMSA advises health professionals to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of those seeking health care and those who may be part of any contact investigation. Medical students across Europe should raise awareness about COVID-19 without increasing fear through sharing accurate information about how the virus spreads, challenging unfounded hysteria and misinformation and speaking out against discrimination based on ethnicity or nationality. Furthermore, in its own upcoming social media campaign, **EMSA is going to be cautious about the images that are shared to ensure that they do not reinforce stereotypes.**

Finally, as EMSA, we would also like to commend the sterling and tireless work of medical professionals worldwide, who are at the front lines of the outbreak.

**(The specified data are based on WHO’s report on March 1st, 2020, 10.00 CET)*