Health advisory to Liberians on the outbreak of pneumonia caused by a new coronavirus in China

22 January 2020

This is a public health advisory by the Ministry of Health through the National Public Health Institute of Liberia on a new virus.

On 31st December 2019, a cluster of pneumonia of unknown etiology was reported in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China. A novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) was identified as the causative virus by Chinese authorities on 7 January.

As of 21 January 2020, a total of 314 confirmed cases have been reported for novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) including six deaths were reported to WHO globally from China. Of the 314 cases reported, 309 cases were reported from China, two from Thailand, one from Japan and one from the Republic of Korea. Cases in Thailand, Japan and the Republic of Korea were exported from Wuhan City, China. Of the 309 confirmed cases in China, 270 cases were confirmed from Wuhan; Of the 270 cases, 51 cases are severely ill and 12 are in critical condition. The United States has its first confirmed case arriving from Wuhan, China. He arrived at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport on January 15 and sought medical attention on the 19 January, 2020. Many of the initial cases were taught to have contracted the virus through animal-to-human transmission has been established. Global surveillance is being established and it is expected that more cases will be reported over the next weeks.

Coronaviruses are zoonotic, meaning they are transmitted between animals and people. Common signs of infection include respiratory symptoms, fever, and cough. Shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death.

Based on currently available information, WHO does not recommend any restriction of travel or trade to and from China. Meanwhile, Liberia will continue strengthen preparedness for health emergencies in line with the International Health Regulations (2005) at the airports.
National Public Health Institute Of Liberia

Preventing and Controlling Public Health Threats

There is no specific treatment for disease caused by the novel coronavirus yet. However, supportive care for infected persons can be highly effective.

International travelers: practice usual precautions

While the cause of the pneumonia seems to be a novel coronavirus, transmission potential and modes of transmission remain unclear. Therefore, it would be prudent to reduce the general risk of acute respiratory infections while travelling in or from affected areas. Liberia will be stricter about health screenings of airplane passengers arriving from Wuhan:

Wuhan city is a major transport hub in China. Given the heavy population movements, cases are expected to significantly increase during the Chinese New Year in the last week of January, the risk of cases being reported form elsewhere is increased.

LIBERIA PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

The Ministry of Health through the National Public Health Institute of Liberia is currently coordinating with partners to continuously assess and manage the risk of importation.

The port health services have been placed on alert and has heightened screening measures at the point of entry. Other public health Measures to protect yourself include:

- Avoiding close contact with people suffering from acute respiratory infections;
- Frequent hand-washing, especially after direct contact with ill people or their environment;
- Avoiding close contact with live or dead farm or wild animals;
- Travelers with symptoms of acute respiratory infection should practice cough etiquette (maintain distance, cover coughs and sneezes with disposable tissues or clothing, and wash hands).

Please report to the nearest Facility.

Any person with Severe acute respiratory infection (SARI), with history of fever and cough requiring admission to hospital, with no other etiology that fully explains the clinical presentation AND

P.O. Box 1871, Emergency Operations Center, Congo Town Back Road, 1000 Monrovia, 10 Liberia
A history of travel to or a person who lived in Wuhan, Hubei Province China in the last 14 days prior to symptom onset:

As this is a new virus, new information is emerging every day; this advisory will be updated as new information and research on the virus and its impact on populations become available.

The public is advised to remain calm. Travelers from Liberia to Wuhan, Guangdong, Beijing and Shanghai are advised to avoid contact with sick people, animals (alive or dead), and animal markets. Travelers from China to Liberia, may be asked questions upon arrival by the port health officers at the points of entry.

The MoH through NPHIL and its partners are fully committed to strengthening the country’s preparedness and response to infectious diseases outbreak. Information will be shared with the public as it becomes available.

For further information:

The Director General, NPHIL: Dr. Mossoka P. Fallah, mfallah1969@gmail.com, +231770299799.

Director, Division of Infectious Disease & Epidemiology, NPHIL: Thomas K. Nagbe, tnknuce311124@gmail.com +231777442444

Signed: 

Mossoka P. Fallah, PhD, MPH, MA
Acting Director General

Approved: 

Dr. Wilhelmina Jallah, MD, MPH
Minister of Health