Outbreak of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

CARPHA Situation Report – No. 14 February 21, 2020

Summary

On 11 February 2020 the WHO confirmed that the disease formerly referred to as the 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) has officially been named coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

This is an update to the Situation Report in relation to the outbreak of COVID-19, published on February 19, 2020.

The numbers of cases reported from mainland China continues to increase and community transmission has been reported in a few other countries. Additionally, there remains considerable uncertainties about this disease due to lack of detailed epidemiological analyses.

To date there have been no reported cases in the Region, hence the risk of importation of COVID-19 to the Region continues to be deemed LOW. CARPHA will continue to work with regional health security partners to review this risk level in the context of the changing global situation.

Health authorities in CARPHA Member States must remain vigilant and continue to do all that is necessary to strengthen their capacity to respond to possible importation of cases. They are also encouraged to increase their capacity for surveillance and review their pandemic preparedness plans, as a matter of urgency.

Updates in this report

- Updates on community transmission globally
- WHO reports on mathematical modelling results
- CARPHA’s modified Weekly Syndromic Surveillance and COVID-19 Reporting Form

Relevant intelligence

Based on available evidence, the transmissibility of SARS-COV-2 virus is believed to be adequate for sustained community transmission. This conclusion is based on the increasing numbers of cases and deaths in China as well as clusters of cases from other countries that have now reported community transmission. There are considerable uncertainties in assessing the risk of this event, due to lack of detailed epidemiological analyses. Based on what is currently known, CARPHA maintains that the risk to the Caribbean Region remains low. The level of the risk may change if sustained community transmission is established outside of China and border...
security measures are relaxed. The US CDC issued a travel notice on February 19\textsuperscript{th} highlighting community spread of COVID-19 in Hong Kong. The notice comes after news of the detection of new cases of the disease in Hong Kong, who have reported no exposure to a known case or travel to affected areas.

### Advanced mathematical modelling – WHO

WHO has been working with an international network of statisticians and mathematical modelers to estimate key epidemiologic parameters of COVID-19, such as the incubation period (the time between infection and symptom onset), case fatality ratio (CFR, the proportion of cases who die), infection fatality ratio (IFR, the portion of all of those infected who die), and the serial interval (the time between symptom onset of a primary and secondary case). Preliminary estimates reported by WHO are as follows (See list of references in [WHO Situation Update 30](#)):  

- **Incubation period:** “median incubation period are 5-6 days (ranging from 0-14 days)”  
- **Serial interval:** “estimates for the serial interval range from 4.4 to 7.5 days.”  
- **Confirmed case fatality ratio, or CFR:** “Within China, the confirmed CFR, as reported by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention,\textsuperscript{9} is 2.3%. This is based on 1023 deaths amongst 44 415 laboratory-confirmed cases as of 11 February.” “Outside of China, CFR estimates among confirmed cases reported is lower than reported from within China.”  
- **Infection Fatality Ratio:** “This represents the fraction of all infections (both diagnosed and undiagnosed) that result in death. Based on these available analyses, current IFR estimates\textsuperscript{10,11,12} range from 0.3% to 1%.”

China continues to report clinically diagnosed cases without laboratory confirmation from Hubei Province. The WHO has included the number of clinically diagnosed cases in the Hubei Province in the total number of cases reported. CARPHA will use the statistics reported by the WHO, supplemented by other sources, where information is not available.

As of February 21, there were 76767 cases of patients with COVID-19. Outside of China, twenty-six (26) countries have confirmed at least one case among travellers exposed in China and/or person-to-person contact. Of the deaths reported to date, eleven were from outside of Mainland China. See Table 1 for more details on cases, deaths and recoveries.
Impact

CARPHA’s Incident Management Team for Emergency Response (IMT-ER) continues to work with regional and international health partners to respond to this public health threat and provide timely advice and assistance to Member States and stakeholders. The Region has not had any confirmed cases of COVID-19 to-date.
Governance

CARPHA’S IMT-ER is leading the health response in keeping with CARPHA’s mandate from the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA). The IMT-ER produces Situation Reports three times weekly.

Operations

Surveillance and Technical Response

- CARPHA distributed a modified Weekly Syndromic Surveillance and COVID-19 Reporting Form to Member States to include COVID-19 surveillance in each week’s report. CARPHA is soliciting feedback from Member States on the form, to enable operationalization of the form by Epi Week 9-10.
- Various technical guidance has been developed including algorithms to assist Country Member States (CMS) to triage and manage suspected cases within their borders and in clinical settings.
- To view all CARPHA technical guidance documents regarding COVID-19, please go to this website http://carpha.org/What-We-Do/Public-Health/Novel-Coronavirus (See also a list on the last page).
- Circulated guidance to CMS and various stakeholders on the identification, isolation and response to suspected cases arriving via sea or air and for Ports of Entry in CMS.
- Activated the APIS Security Cluster tracking of passengers from China through IMPACS.
- Activated the Regional Coordinating Mechanism for Health Security in collaboration with the Caribbean Disaster and Emergency Response Agency and working closely with other stakeholders including OECS and CARICOM, PAHO, and IMPACs for a coordinated regional response.

Laboratory

- CARPHA Medical Microbiology Laboratory (CMML) has procured the appropriate primers, reagents and molecular diagnostic tests and has boosted laboratory capacity in order to test samples from Member States for SARS-COV-2, the new coronavirus causing COVID-19. CMML is working closely with Laboratory Directors on plans of action to manage the COVID-19 emergency.
- Table 2 provides a breakdown of the number of samples and the results for tests carried out during Epi weeks 7-8 by CMML.

Table 2: Summary of laboratory test results for SARS-CoV-2 conducted at CMML and by National Public Health Laboratories as at 20 February 2020.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>No. of Patients</th>
<th>No. of tests</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Other Diagnosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CARPHA Medical Microbiology Lab</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinidad &amp; Tobago</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Lucia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Influenza A H1N1 pdm09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>No. Patients</td>
<td>No. of tests</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Other Diagnosis</td>
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<tr>
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<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BVI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bermuda</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Influenza B Victoria (no deletions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Vincent and The Grenadines</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Influenza B Victoria (no deletions) x 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Member State Laboratories (In-country testing)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>No. Patients</th>
<th>No. of tests</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Other Diagnosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barbados</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Communication and Information**

- On 17th February 2020, Dr. St John was a guest (virtually) on Grenada Broadcasting Network’s Beyond the Headlines with Grenada Minister of Health Honourable Nickolas Steele and Chief Medical Officer Dr Francis Martin to discuss COVID-2019: national and regional overview. [https://youtu.be/BTzAH7cIO4](https://youtu.be/BTzAH7cIO4)
- CARPHA’s Executive Director participated in a joint virtual media briefing with PAHO and CDEMA, hosted by the Caribbean Broadcasting Union for its print, television, and radio members.
- On 10th February, CARPHA distributed a media release titled ‘CARPHA Medical Microbiology Laboratory is Ready to Respond to 2019-nCoV’.
- CARPHA Communications Unit has produced a Social Media Plan of Action for COVID-19 to support Regional Communications Strategy and combat the spread of misinformation spread to the public. The Communications Team is working closely with the Regional Health Communications Network (RHCN) and other stakeholders to provide timely updates and information. They have also developed various videos and infographics to counteract myths about the disease circulating in the Region. The latest media release and other relevant guidelines are available on CARPHA’s website [http://carpha.org/What-We-Do/Public-Health/Novel-Coronavirus](http://carpha.org/What-We-Do/Public-Health/Novel-Coronavirus).

**Logistics and Planning**

- Samples from Member States and reagents are being processed through the Trinidad and Tobago Customs Department without delay.
- Several Member States have implemented various measures to limit importation of the disease, including screening at ports of entry. Details can be obtained from the Ministries of Health of each member state.
CARPHA: COVID-19 Situation Update No 14: February 21, 2020

Stakeholder Engagement

CARPHA is working closely with various stakeholders for a coordinated regional response, including the following:

- **CARPHA has set up an expert Technical Advisory Group to provide guidance on the management of cases, should transmission occur in the region. The first meeting was held on 21 February.**


- CARPHA’s role in the regional response and the collaborative effort of regional organizations was highly commended by various CARICOM heads at their meeting in Barbados on 18-19 February.

- Participated in CDEMA led Regional Exercise Region Rap 2020 to test CDEMA’s means of communication with their stakeholders.

- Held coordination meeting with Dr. Jean Marie PWR Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean and the World Bank on support to the preparation activities of Grenada, St Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominica.

- Met with PAHO focal point for clinical management.

- Delivered health education lecture on COVID-19 to Medical Officers of Health and Public Health Inspectors from all municipal corporations in Trinidad, at a meeting organised by Port of Spain Municipal Cooperation and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development on 14 February.

- Convened the Regional Coordinating Mechanism for Health Security, consisting of Member States, regional and international agencies (including CDEMA, CARICOM, OECS, PAHO, CDC, PHE, PHAC, RIVM, ARS), with agreement on a joint harmonized regional response.

- Ongoing communications with CARICOM on regional health response to COVID-19.

- Convened a webinar for Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) and Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) and Ministers of Tourism on “Mitigating the impact of Coronavirus” with over 120 participants.

- Ongoing communications with Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) with regards to the Caribbean response to 2019-nCoV situation on cruise ships.

- Held nine COVID-19 response coordination meetings with Chief Medical Officers and CARICOM.
Convened a joint briefing of National Disaster Coordinators in association with CARPHA.

Way forward

CARPHA has identified that with the rapid spread of the virus from China to 26 other countries, CMS need to be in a state of readiness for any imported cases and subsequent local transmission. Health authorities in CARPHA Member States must remain vigilant and continue to do all that is necessary to strengthen their capacity to respond to possible importation of cases, not only from China but potentially, other areas with presumed ongoing community transmission. They are also encouraged to increase their capacity for surveillance of acute respiratory infections/severe acute respiratory infections and review their pandemic preparedness plans, as a matter of urgency.

CARPHA would like to draw attention to various guidance documents, including several protocols for early investigations available from WHO website [https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200216-sitrep-27-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=78c0eb78_2](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200216-sitrep-27-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=78c0eb78_2)

CARPHA is working with Technical experts across the region to provide up-to-date guidance and technical advice to CMS. CARPHA stands ready to provide support and guidance to Member States as to how to strengthen their health systems response if person-to-person transmission becomes established in the Caribbean.

Various CARPHA documents can be accessed from our website using the embedded links:

**Technical Documents**

- Traveller’s Guidelines
- Algorithm for Management of a suspected case
- Guidelines for Ports of Entry
- Guidelines for Conveyances
- Algorithm for contact tracing on conveyances

**Media Releases:**

- The Risk of 2019-nCoV Remains Low for the Caribbean but CARPHA Encourages Vigilance at Ports of Entry
- 2019-nCoV: CARPHA urges the Region to be Vigilant, Be Prepared
- Risk of Novel Coronavirus in the Caribbean "Low" says CARPHA, but Preparation Needed
- CARPHA Medical Microbiology Laboratory is Ready to Respond to 2019-nCoV

**Communications Material**

- Is there a new bleach cocktail that can cure and protect against the Flu and the Novel Coronavirus?
- How is the Novel Coronavirus new? Lysol and Clorox have “Human Coronavirus” listed on their labels
- Can a surgical mask protect me from coronavirus? CARPHA Biorisk Manager explains
- Who should wear a mask for protection against coronavirus? CARPHA Biorisk Manager responds

CARPHA: COVID-19 Situation Update No 14: February 21, 2020
• Card 1: Cover your nose and mouth
  Card 2: Cough or sneeze into elbow

Online Training Resources

OpenWHO platform:

• A general introduction to emerging respiratory viruses, including novel coronaviruses (available in French, Simplified Chinese, and Spanish as well).
• Health and safety briefing for respiratory diseases - ePROTECT
• ECDC Micro Learning platform – A suite of short (<2 hours) courses on the control of COVID-19

References


CARPHA: COVID-19 Situation Update No 14: February 21, 2020