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Explainer: Coronavirus reappears in discharged patients, raising questions in containment fight

Southern DAILY

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Inside C2

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‘Risk is very high,’ warns WHO, as coronavirus wipes \$6 trillion off



A volunteer keeps watch near an entrance blocked by barricades and shared bicycles at a residential area in Wuhan, the epicentre of the novel coronavirus outbreak, Hubei province, China February 28, 2020. REUTERS/Stringer CHINA OUT.

GENEVA/BEIJING (Reuters) - The coronavirus spread further on Friday, with cases reported for the first time in six countries across three continents, battering markets and leading the World Health Organization (WHO) to raise its impact risk alert to “very high.”

Hopes that the epidemic that started in China late last year would be over in months, and that economic activity would quickly return to normal, have been shattered.

World shares were on course for their largest weekly fall since the 2008 financial crisis, bringing the global wipeout to \$6 trillion as supply chains were disrupted, travel plans postponed and major events canceled. [MKTS/GLOB] U.S. CDC confirms one more coronavirus case among Diamond Princess evacuees
UK’s Johnson says coronavirus top priority, as first Briton dies

The WHO said it was raising its assessment of the global risk to ‘very high’ from ‘high’, which its head of emergencies Dr Mike Ryan said was intended to put national authorities on full alert.

“I think this is a reality check for every government on the planet - wake up, get ready, this virus may be on its way and you need to be ready,” Ryan said.

The latest WHO figures indicate over 82,000 people have been infected, with over 2,700 deaths in China and 57 deaths in 46 other countries.
Mexico, Nigeria, Estonia, Denmark, the Netherlands and

Lithuania reported their first cases, all with travel history connected to Italy, the worst-affected European country. Mexico is the second Latin American country to register the virus, after Brazil, and the Nigerian case is the first in sub-Saharan Africa.

A Chinese official said some recovered patients had been found to be infectious, suggesting the epidemic may be even harder to eradicate than previously thought.

WHO spokesman Christian Lindmeier said the organization was looking very carefully into reports of some people getting re-infected.

In addition to stockpiling medical supplies, some governments ordered schools shut and canceled big gatherings to try to halt the flu-like disease. Switzerland canceled next week’s Geneva international car show, one of the industry’s most important gatherings.

A volunteer keeps watch near an entrance blocked by barricades and shared bicycles at a residential area in Wuhan, the epicentre of the novel coronavirus outbreak, Hubei province, China February 28, 2020. REUTERS/Stringer CHINA OUT.
Bulgaria said it was ready to deploy troops and military equipment to the border with Turkey to prevent illegal migrant inflows as it steps up measures against the coronavirus. It has not reported any cases. Greece, a gateway for refugees from the Middle East, has also announced tighter border controls. SURGING OUTSIDE CHINA
The outbreak appears to be easing in China, where it first emerged late last year in an market illegally trading wildlife.

Mainland China reported 327 new cases in the last 24 hours, the lowest in the country in more than a month, and China’s three biggest airlines restored some international flights. But the virus is surging elsewhere. Countries other than China now account for about three-quarters of new infections.

South Korea, with the most cases outside China, reported 571 new infections on Friday, bringing the total to 2,337, with 13 people dead.

The death toll in Italy rose to 17 and those testing positive is nearly 900. Cafes and schools have been closed as daily life has ground to a halt.

The WHO’s Ryan said Iran’s outbreak may be worse than realized. Its toll of 34 dead is the highest outside China, although there are reports of much higher numbers. A WHO team is expected to be in Iran by Sunday or Monday.

In the United States, the outbreak of the new coronavirus and efforts to prepare for its possible spread have become political in a presidential election year.

Federal government health officials told lawmakers the country had insufficient testing resources, a source said. But the White House played down the coronavirus crisis and called the high level of news coverage a ploy to hurt U.S. President Donald Trump.

Online retailer Amazon.com joined other companies in implementing travel restrictions for its employees.



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Explainer: Coronavirus reappears in discharged patients, raising questions in containment fight

SHANGHAI/LONDON (Reuters) - A growing number of discharged coronavirus patients in China and elsewhere are testing positive after recovering, sometimes weeks after being allowed to leave the hospital, which could make the epidemic harder to eradicate.

On Wednesday, the Osaka prefectural government in Japan said a woman working as a tour-bus guide had tested positive for the coronavirus for a second time. This followed reports in China that discharged patients throughout the country were testing positive after their release from the hospital.

An official at China's National Health Commission said on Friday that such patients have not been found to be infectious.

Experts say there are several ways discharged patients could fall ill with the virus again. Convalescing patients might not build up enough antibodies to develop immunity to SARS-CoV-2, and are being infected again. The virus also could be "biphasic", meaning it lies dormant before creating new symptoms.

But some of the first cases of "reinfection" in China have been attributed to testing discrepancies.

On Feb. 21, a discharged patient in the southwestern Chinese city of Chengdu was readmitted 10 days after being discharged when a follow-up test came back positive. Lei Xuezhong, the deputy director of the infectious diseases center at the West China Hospital, told People's Daily that hospitals were testing nose and throat samples when deciding whether patients should be discharged, but new tests were finding the virus in the lower respiratory tract. Paul Hunter, a professor of medicine at Britain's University of East Anglia who has been closely following the outbreak, told Reuters that although the patient in Osaka could have relapsed, it is also possible that the virus was still being released into her system from the initial infec-



tion, and she wasn't tested properly before she was discharged.

The woman first tested positive in late January and was discharged from the hospital on Feb. 1, leading some experts to speculate that it was biphasic, like anthrax.

A Journal of the American Medical Association study of four infected medical personnel treated in Wuhan, the epicenter of the epidemic, said it was likely that some

recovered patients would remain carriers even after meeting discharge criteria.

In China, for instance, patients must test negative, show no symptoms and have no abnormalities on X-rays before they are discharged.

Allen Cheng, professor of infectious diseases epidemiology at Monash University in Melbourne, said it wasn't clear whether the patients were re-infected or

had remained "persistently positive" after their symptoms disappeared. But he said the details of the Japan case suggested the patient had been reinfected.

Song Tie, vice director of the local disease control center in southern China's Guangdong province, told a media briefing on Wednesday that as many as 14% of discharged patients in the province have tested positive again and had returned to hospitals for observation.

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Editor's Choice



People inspect a damaged house after a shell fell on a residential area, in Abu Slim district south of Tripoli



Migrants walk to the Turkey's Pazarkule border crossing with Greece's Kastanies, in Pazarkule



Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg attends a youth climate protest in Bristol



Effigies depicting U.S. President Trump and Israeli PM Netanyahu are burnt by Palestinian demonstrators as Israeli soldiers stand guard during a protest in Hebron in the Israeli-occupied West Bank



Palestinian demonstrators argue with Israeli forces during a protest marking the 26th anniversary of shooting attack by Jewish settler Goldstein, in Hebron in the Israeli-occupied West Bank



Dr. Schouteten poses with a cricket between his teeth at Ghent University



Democratic 2020 U.S. presidential candidate former South Bend, Indiana Mayor Pete Buttigieg attends a roundtable in Rock Hill



Medical workers wearing protective gears comfort each other outside a hospital in Daegu

SPECIAL REPORT

Coronavirus Has Sadly Grabbed The Headlines, But There Are Other Worldwide Health Challenges That Are Being Fought On A Daily Basis

The World Has Entered A New Age Of Epidemics



Illustration above depicts the world in a Petri dish.

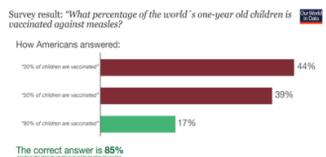
Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

In the 1950's, 400-500 Americans died every year from measles and another 100 from chicken pox. In the last major outbreak of rubella — in 1964-'65 — some 11,000 pregnant American women lost their babies and 2,100 newborns died. •The 1960s vaccine revolution all but wiped out these diseases by 2000. But now they are back — in the U.S. and around the world. •Much blame for this regression so far has been laid on the global anti-vaccination movement. But experts blame much more sweeping reasons, primarily a tectonic change in how humans live now as opposed to three, four and five decades ago. •At the top of the list: we are living closer together in ever-swelling cities, trading and traveling much more, creating climate change, migrating in big numbers — and failing to keep vaccination levels high enough for "herd immunity."

Jeremy Farrar, an expert on infectious disease and director of the U.K.-based Wellcome Trust, tells Axios.

•Driving the news: Disease was under control for a few decades, but now the environmental circumstances under which they were contained have utterly changed. So new answers have to be found. For 2019, U.S. officials have confirmed 481 measles cases in 16 states as of Saturday, according to the website Precision Vaccinations. The Centers for Disease Control confirms 151 cases of mumps for January and February in 30 states and the District of Columbia. And Kentucky alone had an outbreak of 32 cases of chickenpox in one week last year.

Measles cases will "certainly" surpass 2018 due to lack of vaccinations



Europe, too, has had a surge of mumps, pertussis, rubella and tetanus over the last two years, reports the World Health Organization. Measles alone killed 72 people in Europe last year, among 82,596 who contracted the disease, according to the agency.

•In the U.S., the outbreaks are often concentrated in tight-knit communities like former Soviet immigrants in Clark County, Washington.

•Three states — New York, Texas and Washington — are the "leading measles hot-spots" in the U.S., per Precision Vaccinations.

•The diseases are often brought into these communities by travelers returning from countries like Israel, Madagascar, the Philippines and Ukraine.

How the revolution happened: The vaccine against measles was licensed in 1963, chickenpox in 1995, mumps in 1967, and rubella in 1969. Jonas Salk's polio vaccine — igniting the vaccine revolution — came into use in 1955, and the oral version, created by Albert Sabin, was commercialized in 1961.

But the revival of these once-unavoidable, disfiguring and sometimes deadly diseases is only part of the new age of epidemics — they are a component of the general breakdown of the decades-old political and social order.

•This is particularly apparent in the anti-vaccination movement, what has been rebranded "vaccine hesitancy." "People wonder, 'Why am I still getting vaccinated if disease no longer exists?' It's not a stupid question," Farrar said.

•But the trend includes the other social factors as well: climate change, migration, urbanization and elevated travel, which are spreading disease-carrying species such as mosquitoes, bats and rats.



•Malaria in Greece and Italy have been blamed on climate change, but Hotez says human migration and re-emerging poverty may also be at fault.

•In Texas, the appearance of Zika and dengue may be attributable to any or all the same factors. "We don't know," he said. (Courtesy axios.com)

Related Measles outbreak is bringing vaccine exemptions into spotlight

The federal government may try to take action if states don't tighten their vaccine exemption laws and measles continues to spread in sections of the U.S., FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb tells Axios. Driving the news: Overall case numbers of measles remain low in the U.S. but the disease is growing in areas of high non-vaccination rates. Some states like Washington are considering tightening their exemptions even as they continue to face a more organized anti-vaccination movement.

"It's an avoidable tragedy," Gottlieb, who says he's usually a proponent of state rights, tells Axios. "Too many states have lax laws."



Background: The highly contagious disease can only be controlled if there's a large vaccination rate in the population, which the World Health Organization says should be 93%-95% of people.

•States are allowed to adopt their own rules over what types of exemptions are allowed for vaccines. All of them allow exemptions for medical reasons, but many also provide exemptions on religious and/or philosophical grounds.

•These pockets of unvaccinated people are transmitting measles in the U.S., which is particularly dangerous to those who can't get vaccinated, including babies under 12 months and people with susceptible immune systems.

•Gottlieb says the vaccine is one of the

most effective ones (97% with 2 doses) created so far, and for one of the most contagious viruses.

•Measles can cause various complications, including pneumonia, brain damage and sometimes death, and it has been linked to longer term immune problems. WHO reported last week that measles cases tripled globally in 2018 from the prior year, and current reports show multiple deadly outbreaks in the Philippines, Ukraine, Israel and Madagascar.



"It's a self-inflicted wound," says Peter Hotez, dean at Baylor College of Medicine who published a study last year showing possible U.S. "hotspots" of measles due to vaccine exemptions, that he says is already proving to be true.

•Pro-vaccination groups are "losing the battle" to anti-vaccination groups, who've been very active on social media and forming at least one PAC to promote their message, he says.

The other side: Barbara Loe Fisher, co-founder and president of the nonprofit National Vaccine Information Center often labeled as anti-vaccination, tells Axios that 100 cases of measles in a population of 320 million "is not a public health emergency."

•"[It] should not be used to justify eliminating the legal right to exercise informed consent to vaccination, which is protected by the inclusion of flexible medical, religious and conscientious-belief vaccine exemptions in public health laws," she says. (Courtesy axios.com)

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Trump Said News Organizations Were Making The Coronavirus "Look As Bad As Possible"

Pence To Lead U.S. Coronavirus Response Following Days Of Mixed Messages



President Donald Trump stands with Vice President Mike Pence during a news conference at the White House in Washington D.C., February 26, 2020.

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Vice President Mike Pence will lead the U.S. response to coronavirus.

"I'm going to be announcing exactly right now that I'm going to be putting our Vice President Mike Pence in charge," President Donald Trump said at a news conference Wednesday evening.

"The announcement came following days of sending mixed messages on the risk the coronavirus poses to the United States.

Because of the steps the administration had already taken, Trump said Wednesday evening. "The risk to the American people remains very low."

"The number one priority from our standpoint is the health and safety of the

American people," he added.



President Donald Trump holds a document showing countries where the coronavirus has been reported during a news conference at the White House in Washington, February 26, 2020.

Following Trump's comments, Pence spoke and also sought to allay any fears. "The threat to the American public remains low," he said.

"My role will be to continue to bring that team together, to bring to the president the best options for action to see to the safety and well being and health of the American people. We'll also be continuing to reach out to governors, state and local officials," Pence said.

Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar echoed Trump's comments that what the U.S. government has already been doing has worked, but warned that the number of cases would go up.

"The degree of risk has the potential to change quickly," Azar said. "And we can expect to see more cases in the United States. That is why we've been reminding the American public and our state, local, and private sector partners that they should be aware of what a broader response would look like."



Vice President Mike Pence speaks as President Donald Trump listens during a news conference about the coronavirus in the Brady Press Briefing Room of the White House, Feb. 26, 2020, in Washington.

Centers for Disease Control Director Anthony Fauci said a potential vaccine would take a year and a half and in order to contain the coronavirus, the focus has to be on public health measures.

Anne Schuchat, the CDC's principal deputy director, encouraged people to prepare.

"We do expect more cases and this is a good time to prepare. As you heard, it's

the perfect time for businesses, health care systems, universities and schools, to look at their pandemic preparedness plans, dust them off and make sure they are ready and we have lots more information at the CDC's website and in partnership on how to do that," she said during Wednesday's news conference.

She also suggested Americans cover their mouths when they cough, stay home when they're sick and wash their hands.

Trump announced the news conference at the White House with Centers for Disease Control representatives Wednesday morning and blamed news organizations for making coronavirus "look as bad as possible."



President Donald Trump holds a document as he gives a news conference at the White House in Washington, February 26, 2020.

"Low Ratings Fake News MSDNC (Comcast) & @CNN are doing everything possible to make the Caronavirus look as bad as possible, including panicking markets, if possible. Likewise their incompetent Do Nothing Democrat comrades are all talk, no action. USA in great shape!" he tweeted.

Shortly after Trump returned to Washington on Wednesday morning from his two-day visit to India, Trump tweeted that the CDC and his administration were doing a "great job."

In contrast to what the president and his aides have been saying about the situation being contained, CDC officials warned Americans of "significant disruption" coming because of the virus.

"Ultimately, we expect we will see community spread in this country," Dr. Nancy Messonnier, director of the CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, said Tuesday at a news conference.



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