



INTERNATIONAL

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

– THREE MONTHS THAT HAVE CHANGED THE WORLD



Last December, doctors in Wuhan, China noticed something unusual. A cluster of patients all had a similar type of viral pneumonia. The doctors soon found the cause: a deadly new **coronavirus**. The source? One of the city’s live animal markets.

China alerted the World Health Organization (WHO) on December 31.

LOCKDOWN

By January 22, the number of cases had grown from 41 to 550, with 17 deaths. The virus was spreading quickly. So, China took radical action.

First it locked down the city of Wuhan. Then it shut the entire province of Hubei, an area more than double the size of Nova Scotia. It was the largest-known **quarantine** in history. More

than 60 million people were affected.

The government also built two hospitals in just over a week to treat 2500 coronavirus patients.

However, these measures weren’t enough to contain the virus. It began spreading quickly elsewhere in the country. By January 30, China had recorded nearly 8000 infections, with 170 deaths.

PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

The virus was also spreading beyond China. By late January, it had **infiltrated** 21 other nations. It was carried by people who’d visited Wuhan. So WHO declared the virus outbreak a “public health emergency of international concern.”

ITALY’S NIGHTMARE

The COVID-19 outbreak in northern Italy was especially **virulent**. It showed how quickly the virus can surge if countries wait too long to lock down.

After the outbreak began there, hospitals were overwhelmed with seriously ill patients. There wasn’t enough equipment or beds.

“When we saw [the Chinese] building up two hospitals in a week I said, ‘This is crazy,’” stated Italian Dr. Giacomo Grasselli. “Now, I completely understand why they did that... It’s like a bomb of patients.”

By early April, Italy had almost 129,000 cases of COVID-19, and 15,000 deaths. At 12 percent, Italy’s virus death rate is the highest in the world.

DEFINITIONS

CORONAVIRUS: a family of viruses that can infect animals and humans, and that causes the common cold and COVID-19

INFILTRATE: to enter or pass through without permission

QUARANTINE: isolation to prevent spreading disease

VIRULENT: infectious; having the ability to cause disease



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On February 2, the Philippines reported the world's first death outside China. Shortly after that, countries began flying home citizens trapped in China and other affected countries. Many nations also closed their borders to non-residents who had recently travelled to China. They hoped to prevent more outbreaks.

DID YOU KNOW?

COVID-19 stands for Corona Virus Disease 2019. WHO chose the name because it didn't refer to a place, animal, person, or group.

SPREADING FAR AND WIDE

In mid-February, the number of new cases in China began to level off. China's aggressive attempts to slow the spread of the virus appeared to be working. However, cases began spiking in South Korea and Iran. Northern Italy was next. Then it was Spain's turn.

PANDEMIC!

On March 11, WHO declared the coronavirus a **pandemic**. That means it will likely spread to all countries. So country after country is locking down. One in

three humans now lives under mass quarantine. That includes most of Canada and 35 of 50 U.S. states. Schools and universities have closed in more than 160 countries. That affects about 97 percent of the world's students.

As of April 5, more than 1.25 million cases of COVID-19 were reported in over 200 countries and territories. Some 68,100 people had died. More than 258,000 people had recovered.

HELPLESS TO HELP

At the moment, the virus is spiking in the U.S. That nation has already seen twice as many cases as Italy and Spain, and three times as many as China. New York State has been hit hard with over 123,000 cases. More than 4200 had died there by early April. U.S. scientists say it could kill between 100,000 and 240,000 Americans.

Now, experts worry about the virus spreading to places like Mumbai or Monrovia.

Why? A pandemic can overwhelm **developing nations**. Nations with **repressive** regimes or where wars are going on are at bigger risk as well. Places like Haiti, which has a very weak health system, and Venezuela,

HEALTHCARE HEROES

This pandemic is putting a lot of pressure on healthcare workers. They are working long hours, risking infection – and their lives.

People are showing their gratitude. In Madrid, Rome, Amsterdam, New Delhi, and elsewhere, they gather nightly on balconies and at windows to applaud these workers. Even King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands takes part.

“We're clapping... to say thank you to all the health care workers in the Netherlands protecting us against this horrible coronavirus,” the King stated.

In the U.K., 100,000 people signed an online thank you letter. People have sent pizzas to grocery store staff, and left cash and notes for pharmacists, too.

where there's little access to medicines, are vulnerable, too.

Richer nations normally provide aid during such a crisis. But they have their own healthcare and economic challenges. So will they be willing help? WHO calls the pandemic “the defining health crisis of our time.” Why? Because we will be defined by how we handle it. ★

DEFINITIONS

DEVELOPING NATION: a country with little industrial and economic activity and where people generally have low incomes

PANDEMIC: an epidemic that is geographically widespread; occurring throughout a region or even throughout the world

REPRESSIVE: ruling or controlling people by the use of force or by laws that put unreasonable limits on their freedom



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ON THE LINES

Answer the following in complete sentences:

1. Explain what a **coronavirus** is.

2. What does **COVID-19** stand for?

3. Where and when did this new coronavirus first appear? How do authorities believe it spread to humans?

4. Describe the measures China adopted to try to control the outbreak in early 2020.

5. Which European country was hit hard by COVID-19? How many people in this nation were infected by early April?

6. What does **WHO** stand for?

7. What did the WHO declare on March 11? Explain what this is.

8. What measures have many countries taken to try to slow the spread of COVID-19? Explain.

9. How many people were infected with COVID-19 by early April? How many had died? How many had recovered?
