

OUTBREAK OF CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC AND EFFECT OF RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENT ON NIGERIANS

INTRODUCTION:

- The coronavirus belongs to a family of viruses that may cause various symptoms such as pneumonia, fever, breathing difficulty, and lung infection. These viruses are common in animals worldwide, but very few cases have been known to affect humans. The World Health Organization (WHO) used the term 2019 novel coronavirus to refer to a virus that affects the lower respiratory tract of patients with pneumonia in Wuhan, China on 29 December 2019. The WHO announced that the official name of the 2019 novel virus is coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The current reference name for the virus is severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).
- The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has been identified as the cause of an outbreak of respiratory illness in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China which began in December 2019. In response to the outbreak, the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC) dispatched a rapid response team to accompany health authorities of Hubei province and Wuhan city to conduct epidemiological and etiological investigations. The WHO confirmed that the outbreak of the coronavirus epidemic was associated with the Huainan South China Seafood Marketplace, but no specific animal association was identified. As of 31 January 2020, this epidemic had spread to 19 countries with 11 791 confirmed cases, including 213 deaths. The World Health Organization has declared it a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.
- As at 17th of April 2020, at least 185 countries and territories around the world have been affected with a total of more than 2.1 million infections, including some 143,000 deaths confirmed.
- The new coronavirus was introduced to Nigeria on February 25, 2020, by an Italian engineer traveling from Milan (a European center of the virus outbreak) via Istanbul to Lagos on Turkish Airlines. The first confirmed case of the pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 in Nigeria was announced on 27 February 2020, when the Italian citizen in Lagos tested positive for the virus, caused by SARS-CoV-2.
As at 17th of April 2020, a total of 19 states, including the Federal Capital Territory, in Nigeria have confirmed number of 442 infected people and 13 deaths.

CLINICAL MANIFESTATION, DIAGNOSIS AND RECOVERIES

- The complete clinical manifestation is not clear yet, as the reported symptoms range from mild to severe, with some cases even resulting in death. The most commonly reported symptoms are fever, cough, myalgia or fatigue, pneumonia, and complete dyspnea, whereas less common reported symptoms include headache, diarrhea, hemoptysis, runny nose, and phlegm-producing cough. Patients with mild symptoms were reported to recover after 1 week while severe cases were reported to experience progressive respiratory failure due to alveolar damage from the virus, which may lead to death. Cases resulting in death were primarily middle-aged and elderly patients with pre-existing diseases (tumor surgery, cirrhosis, hypertension, coronary heart disease, diabetes, and Parkinson's disease). Case definition guidelines mention the following symptoms: fever, decrease in lymphocytes and white blood cells, new pulmonary infiltrates on chest radiography, and no improvement in symptoms after 3 days of antibiotics treatment.
- As at 17th April 2020, more than 500,000 people in the world and 152 people in Nigeria have recovered to date.

PREVENTION AND CONTROL

- Prevention and control strategies and methods are reported at three levels: national level, case-related population level, and general population level. At the national level, the National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China issued the "No.1 announcement" on 20 January 2020, which officially included the COVID-19 as part of the management of class B legal infectious diseases, and allowed for class A infectious disease preventive and control measures to be implemented. Under this policy, medical institutes can adopt isolation treatment and observation protocols to prevent and control the spread of the COVID-19. On 28 January 2020, the National Health Commission issued protocols for rapid prevention and control measures in order to effectively contain the spread of the epidemic through a "big isolation and big disinfection" policy during the Chinese Spring Festival. National-level strategies have also been issued with targeted measures for rural areas (issued on 28 January 2020) and the elderly population (issued on 31 January 2020). Several public health measures that may prevent or slow down the transmission of the COVID-19 were introduced; these include case isolation, identification and follow-up of contacts, environmental disinfection, and use of personal protective equipment. To date, no specific antiviral treatment has been confirmed to be effective against COVID-19.
- In order to curb and slow the spread of the virus, the Nigerian government, on the 30th of March 2020, enforced the 14-day lockdown in the commercial hub, Lagos, neighbouring state, Ogun and the nation's capital, Abuja. As at the time the government announced the lockdown, there had been 51 confirmed cases of coronavirus and one death recorded. Also, on the state level, states, such as Ekiti, Anambra, Delta, Kaduna, have implemented the 14-day lockdown policy.

EFFECT OF LOCKDOWN AND RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENT

- When the government announced the lockdown, it did so with the promise to make available palliatives aimed at relieving some of the economic pain through the lockdown period. Very few people have gotten relief materials from the Federal government and those that got anything at all from the State governments complained that the gesture was too little to sustain them for more than a day. Also, cash disbursement that was promised to "the poorest and most vulnerable in the society" seems not to have taken effect up till now.
- Those who can afford to provide for themselves and their families face the problem of increasing prices of foodstuffs and goods. With the borders into states closed, transportation of food items, perishable and non perishable, become another major issue for Nigerians. As part of the lockdown incentive, some major markets have been closed down in order to reduce the spread of the disease. However, this poses a problem for citizens as it becomes harder to get food and provisions for the family and for themselves.
- Most Nigerians live on a daily wage or a subsistence lifestyle where they fend from whatever they are able to make in a day to survive. This cycle is what many routinely undergo. So, imagine what, to them, might turn out to be an option if the lockdown continues to prevent them from sourcing for their daily bread in the legal way which they have been accustomed to. We cannot run away from the fact that people are getting hungry and even angrier, which is not to say enough reason to rob or steal from others, but there is little you can do to dissuade a man who is hungry and has mouths to feed from going to the extreme when you have prevented him from fending for himself the legal way.
- It has been three weeks since the lockdown commenced and no ending in sight. Without the necessary palliative measures to help cushion the economic effect of staying at home with no source of income, a time would come when people will revolt and care less of getting infected by the virus but choose to go out to survive rather than starving to death.