



29 February 2020

Covid-19: The first ten weeks

Timeline: 21 December 2019 – 29 February 2020

21 Dec 2019	First cluster of patients with 'pneumonia of an unknown cause' identified on 21 December 2019. It was not reported by China.
31 Dec 2019	China contacts the World Health Organisation (WHO) and informs them of 'cases of pneumonia of unknown etiology' detected in the Wuhan District.
8 Jan 2020	The Chinese government agrees to accept a WHO scientific team to assist their own researchers.
11 Jan 2020	Chinese state media reported the first known death from an illness caused by the virus.
20 and 22 Jan 2020	The first confirmed cases outside mainland China occur in Japan, South Korea and Thailand, according to the WHO. Public Health England announces it is moving the risk level to the British public from 'very low' to 'low'.
23 Jan 2020	Wuhan (population over 11 million) is cut off by the Chinese authorities.
26 Jan 2020	China extends the 'Spring Festival' holiday in order to contain the coronavirus outbreak.
29 Jan 2020	The UK's first two patients test positive for coronavirus. They are Chinese nationals from the same family staying at a hotel in York. A plane evacuating Britons from Wuhan arrives at RAF Brize Norton. Passengers go into 14 day quarantine at a specialist hospital on Merseyside.
30 Jan 2020	WHO declares a global health emergency amid thousands of new cases in China.
31 Jan 2020	213 people had died and 9,800 infected worldwide.
2 Feb 2020	The first death from coronavirus is reported outside China – a 44-year-old man in the Philippines.

4 Feb 2020	The UK directs its citizens to leave China if possible.
5 Feb 2020	A cruise ship in Japan quarantines 3,600 people after a two-week trip to Southeast Asia. 218 people onboard the ship tested positive for the virus.
7 Feb 2020	The Chinese doctor, Dr. Li Wenliang, who tried to ring early alarms that a cluster of infections could spin out of control, dies after contracting the virus.
11 Feb 2020	The disease is named 'Covid-19', an acronym that stands for 'coronavirus disease 2019'.
17 Feb 2020	China said it was reviewing its trade and consumption of wildlife, which has been identified as a probable source of the outbreak.
19 Feb 2020	443 passengers leave the Diamond Princess cruise ship. A total of 621 people aboard the ship were infected.
23 Feb 2020	Italy sees a major surge in coronavirus cases – up to 150.
24 Feb 2020	The Trump administration asks Congress for \$1.25 billion for coronavirus response – the US had 35 confirmed cases and no deaths.
26 Feb 2020	Latin America reports its first coronavirus case.
28 Feb 2020	800 people are now infected in Italy. The first British victim dies of coronavirus onboard the Diamond Princess. UK authorities confirm the first case of the illness to be passed on inside the country. The worst week for the global stock markets since the 2008 financial crash. The WHO raises the coronavirus alert to the highest level.

Within the first two weeks of 2020 the news about a new 'pneumonia' began to be heard and shared around the world. It originated in the Wuhan District of China and started spreading outside its borders.

The UK started to be infected by travellers coming back into the country, but no one knew what it was. By the end of January, the first confirmed case of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (later shortened to Covid-19) was recorded in York. Italy suffered from an outbreak quickly and the threat of a pandemic caused a global Stock Market fall.

By the end of February it was not clear what the implications would be for the UK, but the virus was spreading in countries where there was no national 'lockdown', and the WHO put the world on red-alert.

See 11 April 2020 news item.