
28th January 2020

To: Vice Chancellors of Public Universities and Principals of TVET Colleges
cc: Director General: Department of Higher Education and Training
cc: All Institutional and HIGHER HEALTH Staff
From: HIGHER HEALTH CEO: Dr Ramneek Ahluwalia

HEALTH EMERGENCY ALERT: HIGHER HEALTH COMMUNIQUE on NOVEL CORONA VIRUS

Introduction

In early January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO), China Country office flagged the discovery of a virus, known as the Novel Coronavirus. It has been identified to be zoonotic, meaning it can spread from animals to humans. The virus is very contagious and spreads from one infected person to another, through coughing and sneezing, close personal contact, etc. The infected person presents cold like symptoms and respiratory tract illnesses. The virus has since spread at a high pace outside China, with reported cases in the following countries, Japan, Republic of Korea, Vietnam, Republic of Singapore, Australia, Thailand, Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, United States of America, French, and one suspected case in Africa, reported in the Ivory Coast.

Considering China is a major trading partner with South Africa and Africa, which includes cross migration, and travels by our students and staff from Institutions of Higher Education to other countries, including China, all of which exposes South Africa's vulnerability to the virus. HIGHER HEALTH feels it is important to proactively engage the Higher Education sector and students, regarding the risk and prevention measures on this fast spreading virus.

HIGHER HEALTH has been following the development of this global threat, as well as understanding the facts communicated by WHO, the National Department of Health and the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, so that we can communicate to all our students about this new global health threat.

Signs and Symptoms of Coronavirus

- Fever, sore throat
- Coughing and sneezing
- Difficulty in breathing,

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- Runny nose & headaches,
- General feeling of malaise.
- Symptoms may go away on their own but expert's advice seeking care early.

Who is most at risk?

- Those with a weak immune system,
- The elderly and young
- Any person with a documented travel history to China within 14 days before symptom onset
- Close physical contact with a confirmed patient with the Coronavirus
- Healthcare worker/s who have been exposed to patients with severe acute respiratory infections
- Direct contact with animal source or humans, in countries where the coronavirus is known

How it spreads

Commonly spread from an infected person to others through:

- The air by coughing and sneezing
- Close personal contact; touching or shaking hands
- Touching contaminated objects and not washing hands

How to keep safe

There is currently no vaccine available to protect one against the Coronavirus infection.

Transmission can be reduced through:

- Handwashing with soap and water
- Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth with dirty hands
- Avoid contact with people who are infected with the virus
- Should you feel unwell ensure that you are taking adequate fluids and on bed rest
- If you are experiencing any symptoms associated to the virus, please seek medical guidance

HIGHER HEALTH encourages anyone who might be experiencing any of the signs and symptoms detailed above to seek assistance from a registered medical practitioner, Campus Health Care staff at the campus clinic or with the Campus Health and Wellness coordinator, etc.

HIGHER HEALTH is currently liaising very closely with National Department of Health and NICD towards keeping abreast with the developments in respect to the situation. Parallely we are going to work with existing campus clinics, our Campus Health and Wellness Coordinators and other relevant staff to provide information and support on the growing epidemic so that students who call at the clinics are adequately assisted.

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Kindly disseminate this information to all students and staff through your communication team. For further queries please contact Ms. Anuysha Naidu on anuysha@higherhealth.ac.za

Dr Ramneek Ahluwalia
Chief Executive Officer

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