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WHITE PAPER

Coronavirus outbreak update

as of 30th January 2020



Coronavirus outbreak (as of 30th January 2020) update

With increasing news reports on the coronavirus outbreak, more countries are taking action and, as a result, a number of customers have approached us for advice on outbreak planning.

Although at this time the threat remains low, we have put together some information on the current coronavirus outbreak centred on China and some considerations to make sure you are prepared if anything changes.

Background

Coronaviruses (CoV) are a family of microorganisms that can cause illnesses ranging from colds to more severe diseases such as SARS - Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (caused by SARS-CoV) and MERS - Middle East Respiratory Syndrome caused by (MERS-CoV).

Strains of the disease not previously seen in humans are termed novel coronaviruses (NCoV) and the current Chinese variant is being termed Wuhan novel coronavirus (WN-CoV) in the UK, but 2019-nCoV in the US and by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Illness is usually a result close contact with an already infected person – coronaviruses are typically transmitted through respiratory droplets/contact with infected secretions and other body fluids. Due to the fact WN-CoV is a new disease there is only limited information currently available about its routes of transmission and contagiousness.

New, novel coronaviruses occur as a result of a virus “jumping” from one animal species to another and causing an infection that is then able to be passed on to other members of that new species.



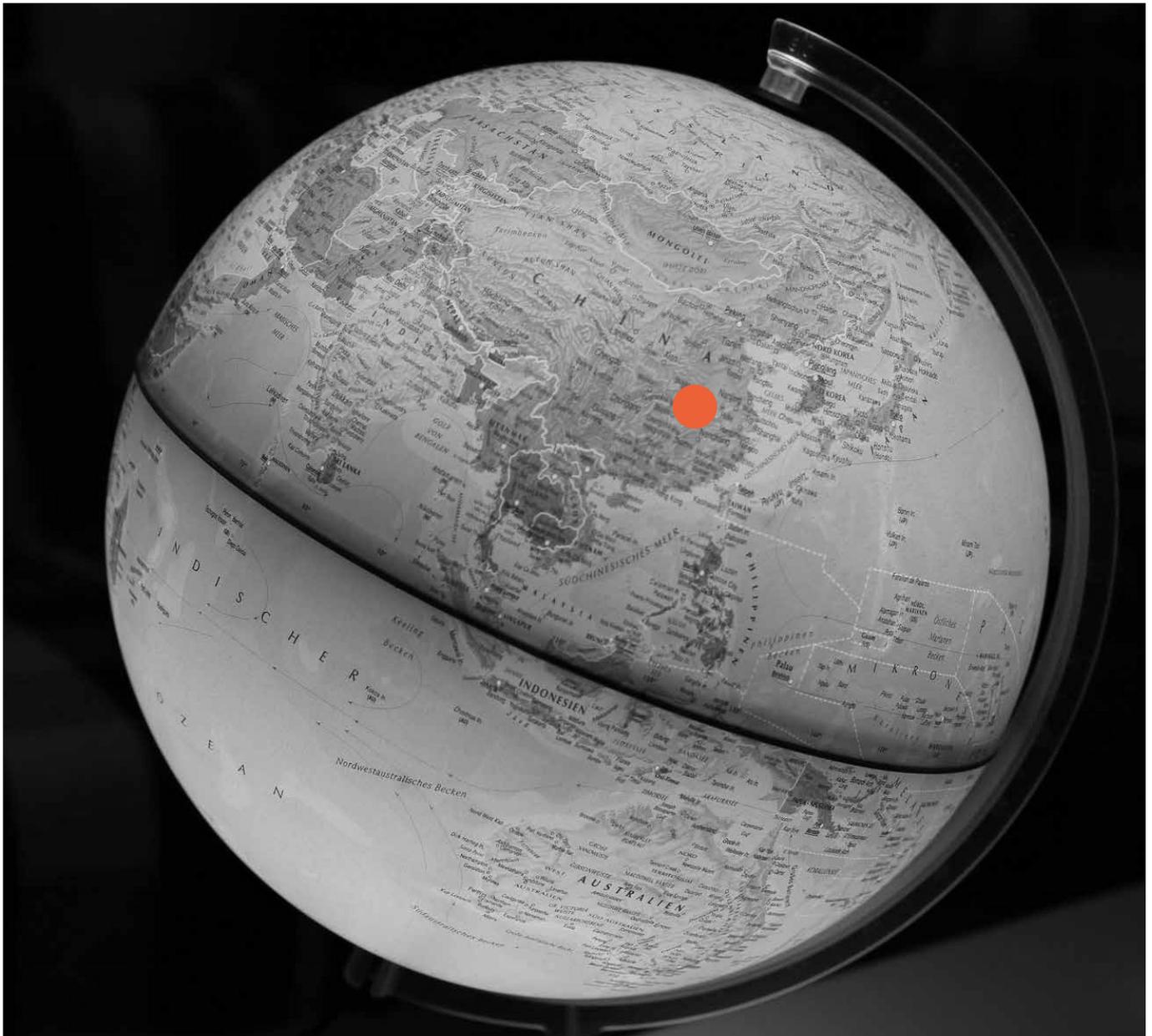
Current outbreak

The WHO were initially alerted to a potentially new virus causing cases of pneumonia in the area around Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China on the 31st December 2019. Since this time over 7,000 people have become infected of which approximately 170 have died (at the time of writing).

The virus has also been identified in at least 100 people in 20 other countries and territories, although it is believed that, so far, all those with the disease have travelled from an infected area of China.

This new organism has been identified as a betacoronavirus and so is the same genera as both the SARS and MERS viruses. It is believed that it is most likely to have originated from bats, although, if a secondary host is involved it is not yet known what that may be.

For SARS civet cats were found to be a secondary host prior to the virus causing disease in humans and for MERS the secondary host is dromedary camels.



Current outbreak planning

With the increasing spread of the virus both in and out of China, more information and advice is being produced about the disease and its spread.

While the threat level in the UK remains low – and as of yesterday gov.uk identifies that all people so far tested in the UK have proved negative for the disease – information and advice is being provided and regularly updated in relation to travel to and from infected areas and what should be done. This information includes:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/wuhan-novel-coronavirus/>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-information-for-the-public>

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/china>

It should be stressed that at the time of writing this outbreak is not considered a pandemic and the current risk to people who have not travelled to or come into contact with people from the infected areas is low. However, there are a number of proactive precautions you can consider making sure, if needed, you are prepared:

- Reviewing and updating any business continuity planning you have in place for such events - usually will be some form of pandemic planning (although this outbreak has not reached this classification yet);
- Sharing Government advice on travel to specific destinations (high risk) with staff who may travel to these areas for work purposes;
- Checking business travel destinations and any advice being given for them;
- Creating or reviewing any risk assessments covering activities of staff travelling abroad, issuing travel safety procedures as appropriate, recording this issuing of such information; and
- Nominating specified personnel to monitor and collate information on the situation in readiness for making further plans as and when conditions may change.

For information on the services Assurity Consulting provide, please get in touch.



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