



Ressort: Wirtschaft und Finanzen

Coronavirus epidemic: a short survey

Rome, 25.03.2020 [ENA]

There is a high risk of the coronavirus epidemic returning in Italy after it has run its course first. According to experts the risk of a return of the COVID-19 epidemic, even after a period of absence of new cases like for the municipality of Vò Euganeo (in Veneto) exists, and it is high.

The Italian Pharmaceuticals Agency AIFA has permitted testing antiviral drug AVIGAN for the coronavirus,

Health Minister Roberto Speranza said Monday.

After a preliminary analysis of the existing data on AVIGAN, the technical-scientific committee is developing a testing and research programme to assess the impact of the drug in the initial phases of the disease.

The first step in this outbreak has been identifying it. In the case of the COVID-19 outbreak, a cluster of cases of pneumonia were first identified.

On 31 December 2019 Cluster of cases of pneumonia of unknown aetiology (unknown cause) were detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. China alerted the World Health Organization (WHO) China Country Office. Case definitions determine who may be, and who is, part of an outbreak.

“Pneumonia of unknown aetiology,” is a classification used in surveillance which includes specific criteria, established following the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak in 2002-2003.

The Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market was quickly identified as being associated with the majority of early cases of pneumonia of unknown aetiology. Consequently, there was an early intervention to diminish spread from this source.

On 1 January 2020 Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan city closed for environmental sanitation and decontamination as it was associated with many early cases of the pneumonia of unknown aetiology outbreak.

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council launched a national emergency response. Internationally, on 2nd January 2020, the incident management system (IMS) of the WHO was activated. From 31st December to 3rd January there were 44 people identified with pneumonia of unknown aetiology in Wuhan, China. Identifying the causal agent was essential. Initial investigations discovered that the outbreak was not due to seasonal influenza, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

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(SARS) or Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). Deep sequencing to detect genetic material is the most powerful tool we have to identify organisms, and this was used to identify this novel coronavirus.

On 7 January 2020 the Chinese authorities identified a novel type of coronavirus (subsequently named SARS CoV-2) as a cause of the pneumonia outbreak.

Whole genome sequence data of the causal agent can be used to develop other, simpler, diagnostic tests. Making these data available quickly was important in developing kits for testing suspected cases.

On 12 January 2020 China shared the genetic sequence of the novel coronavirus. In this early phase, protocols for diagnosis and treatment, surveillance, epidemiological investigation, management of close contacts and diagnostic testing were being developed.

Other countries were also searching for cases, and then determining whether the case arose from

transmission within the country, or if it had been imported. Correct public health interventions could then be taken.

On 24 January 2020 The first report of a case in Europe was defined by Ministère des Solidarités et de la Santé in France. This was not unpredicted because of the growing number of cases reported outside of China by this time. Interventions in China continued, with updating of protocols for diagnosis, treatment and epidemic prevention and control; case isolation and treatment were strengthened. On 23rd January strict traffic restrictions were put in place. Other measures included cancelling mass gatherings. More details on the response in China will come in the course next week. The outbreak continued to be closely

monitored internationally.

On 30 January 2020 The WHO Director-General declared the 2019 nCoV (former name of COVID-19) outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern under International Health Regulations (2005) and only on 11 March 2020 The WHO Director-General declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic.

SARS-CoV-2 was first confirmed to have spread to Italy on 31 January 2020, when two Chinese tourists in Rome tested positive for the virus. One week later an Italian man repatriated back to Italy from the city of Wuhan, China, was hospitalised and confirmed as the third case in Italy.

A cluster of cases was later detected, starting with 16 confirmed cases in Lombardy on 21 February, and 60 additional cases and first deaths on 22 February. By the beginning of March, the virus had spread to all regions of Italy. The pandemic provoked till now large economic damage to the Italian economy. The sectors of tourism, accommodation and food services were among the hardest hit by foreign countries' limitations to travel to Italy, and by the nationwide lockdown imposed by the government on 8 March. At the moment it's of crucial importance for the European Union to show solidarity with affected third countries, in particular those in the EU's immediate neighbourhood in order to mitigate the overall

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