COVID-19

A new strain of coronavirus known as COVID-19 which stands for Coronavirus Disease 2019 was discovered in December 2019 and initiated in Wuhan, Hubei province, China.¹ The virus has infected over 300,000 individuals globally as of March 2020.²

Although little is known about the new strain, it is the seventh known coronavirus to infect humans.³

Out of the first 44,672 confirmed cases in Wuhan, China 86.6% were between the age of 30-79 years.⁴

Infected individuals commonly experience upper respiratory tract infections.³

The number of deaths has surpassed 4,000 and the World Health Organization has labelled the virus as a global health emergency due to the high infectivity of COVID-19.²

A recent report from Germany shows that asymptomatic individuals who are infected with COVID-19 are infectious and can spread the virus.⁵ The best way to prevent the spread of viruses is to practice good hygiene including regular hand washing and avoiding contact with others when sick.
Due to the global response towards COVID-19, new technologies are being explored to detect the virus in individuals. Most recently, a form of real-time reverse-transcription PCR was developed – a rapid and robust diagnostic tool that helps identify whether mRNA specific to COVID-19 is expressed in an individual. A positive test for viral mRNA validates whether an individual is infected.⁶

Due to early detection of the COVID-19, the genomic sequence of the virus has been identified and helps detect those who may be infected. Yet, the virus continues to spread to new countries due to international travel.⁷

The current antiviral drugs known as remdesivir and chloroquine have been shown to be effective in controlling COVID-19 infection in vitro, but clinical studies must be conducted to determine its efficacy in humans.⁸

References