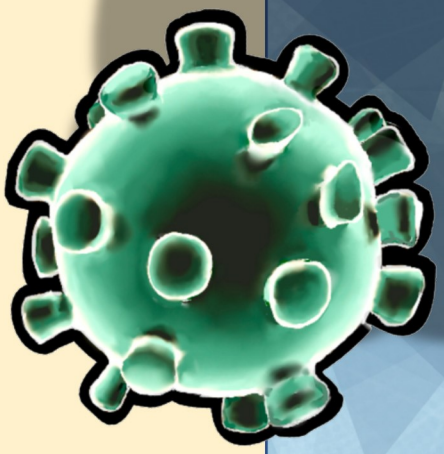
COVID-19

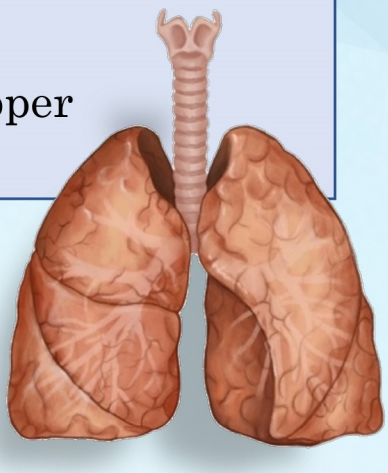
A new strain of coronavirus known as COVID-19 which stands for Coronavirus Disease 2019 was discovered in December 2019 and initiated in Wuhan, Hubei province, China.[1] The virus has infected over 300,000 individuals globally as of March 2020.[2]



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.

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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]

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