

# Novel coronavirus outbreak

On 31 December 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) China country office reported a cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan City, Hubei Province in China. A novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) has been confirmed as the causative virus. Since then, several other cities in China and other countries have also reported cases.<sup>[1]</sup> Most cases to date have links to Wuhan, but person-to-person spread has also been described.<sup>[1]</sup> Subsequently, the WHO declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020.<sup>[2]</sup>

In South Africa (SA), a number of initiatives have already been taken to prepare for the epidemic. As a part of that process, SA Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) organised a stakeholder workshop on 31 January 2020 at Ekurhuleni. The workshop was attended by representatives from various organisations such as SACAA, the National Department of Health, the National Health Laboratory Services, the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, the Airports Company SA, the customs and immigration department, the SA Police Service, the University of Pretoria and airlines representatives. During the workshop, the participants shared their experiences of managing a previous epidemic, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), their readiness, the current

state of the coronavirus epidemic and practical steps to manage it. It was decided that there is a need for regular updates to maintain awareness among the SA population. In addition, a concerted effort should be made to build capacity to manage suspected cases among health professionals and other frontline workers.

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