Kentucky Hospital Research & Education Foundation
Emergency Preparedness Update
for February 24, 2020

Health officials worry as untraceable COVID-19 virus clusters emerge

(AP) In South Korea, Singapore and Iran, clusters of infections are leading to a jump in cases of the new viral illness outside China. But it's not the numbers that are worrying experts: It's that increasingly they can't trace where the clusters started.

World Health Organization officials said China's crackdown on parts of the country bought time for the rest of the world to prepare for the new virus. But as hot spots emerge around the globe, trouble finding each source — the first patient who sparks every new cluster — might signal the disease has begun spreading too widely for tried-and-true public health steps to stamp it out.

That worst-case isn't here yet, the WHO insists. It isn't convinced that countries outside China need more draconian measures, but it pointed to spikes in cases in Iran and South Korea to warn that time may be running out to contain the virus.

Full AP story: https://apnews.com/783c7a396adf5f99b8cff399f9478e36

Coronavirus updates: 5 dead and 200 infected in Italy as Europe braces for COVID-19

(NBC) As new hotspots arise in South Korea, Italy and Iran, here is the latest for Monday, Feb. 24.

- Number of deaths in China nears 2,600
- Italy records fifth coronavirus death as it becomes worst-hit country in Europe
- Two more doctors die of coronavirus in China
- South Korea works to contain spread of virus
- China postpones key political meeting because of virus
- China bans illegal wild animal trading amid coronavirus outbreak: state media
- Coronavirus deaths spike to 12 in Iran; 47 cases confirmed

Learn more: https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/coronavirus-updates-5-dead-200-infected-italy-europe-braces-covid-n1141466

A deadly virus is spreading from state to state
and has infected 26 million Americans so far. *It's the flu!*

(CNN) The novel coronavirus that's sickening thousands globally -- and at least 15 people in the US -- is inspiring countries to close their borders and Americans to buy up surgical masks quicker than major retailers can restock them.

There's another virus that has infected at least 26 million Americans across the country and killed at least 14,000 people this season alone. It's not a new pandemic -- it's influenza. The 2019-2020 flu season, which began September 29, is projected to be one of the worst in a decade, according to the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. At least 250,000 people have been hospitalized with complications from the flu, and that number is predicted to climb as flu activity swirls.

Learn more" https://www.cnn.com/2020/01/30/health/flu-deadly-virus-15-million-infected-trnd/index.html

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Related: Hold on to expired PPE

(Shared from Janarae Conway, HEART/HPP Region 4 Coordinator) Janarae was on a CDC webinar recently, and after questions were raised about supply chair concerns she said that the presenters indicated options were being considered. She has urged her coalition partners not to throw away any expired PPE at this time, as well as any PAPR/CAPR filters.

More specifically she quotes this from the webinar: "CDC would like to encourage recipients, including local health departments, to maintain any stockpiles of expired PPE that is past its intended shelf life until further guidance can be provided. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) is working with both the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to determine additional guidance on expired PPE…" [Slides from CDC brief are attached.]

[R Bartlett note: Actions like this are not unprecedented. They are referred to as a "Shelf Life Extension Program" (SLEP). ASTHO has an article on their website that explains it in more detail. In summary, "The federal Shelf Life Extension Program (SLEP) extends the expiration dates on qualifying drugs and other materiel in federal stockpiles. SLEP is administered by the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) in cooperation with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).[1] The program is an acknowledgement that the actual shelf life of drugs and other medical products may be longer than their stated expiration date, depending on their storage conditions. The purpose of SLEP is to defer replacement costs of stockpiled drugs by extending their useful life."]

ASTHO link: https://www.astho.org/Programs/Preparedness/Public-Health-Emergency-Law/Emergency-Use-Authorization-Toolkit/Federal-Shelf-Life-Extension-Program-Fact-Sheet/

Related: **University of Nebraska continues to monitor 13 from cruise ship**
Ten of these individuals remain in the National Quarantine Unit
Three are receiving care in the Nebraska Biocontainment Unit.
UNMC Update site: https://www.nebraskamed.com/COVID

Related: **More than 100 children have died from the flu so far this season**

(Axios) 105 children have reportedly died in the U.S. from the flu, the highest so far this season, per data released Friday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Health officials typically treat a high rate of seniors, a vulnerable population during flu season, but this year, children and young adults have been more susceptible. The influenza B strain, which tends to be more common in children, has caused the majority of pediatric deaths.

The strain carries gastrointestinal symptoms, including vomiting, which can influence one's ability to take antivirals to shorten the flu's duration, CNN reports.

Story link: https://www.axios.com/child-deaths-the-flu-ef28005b-899d-4e88-a9d8-22f67cfc9980.html

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Coronavirus fears prompt FBI to order $40G in hand sanitizer, face masks
Read more: https://www.foxnews.com/health/coronavirus-fears-prompt-fbi-to-order-40g-in-hand-sanitizer-face-masks-report

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White House to ask Congress for emergency coronavirus funding

(Politico) The White House will soon ask Congress for emergency funds to fight the coronavirus outbreak, after weeks of hesitation by the administration to press for additional funding, said four individuals with knowledge of the pending request. A congressional aide said that lawmakers have been told to expect the request in the coming days.

However, the amount could be significantly lower than some public health officials have argued is necessary — potentially as little as $1 billion, said two individuals, which could be rapidly exhausted by development of potential vaccines, widespread lab tests and numerous other investments.

Full story: https://www.politico.com/news/2020/02/22/emergency-coronavirus-funding-116761

Permanent Funding Mechanism for Public Health Emergencies Introduced in New Legislation

(*Global Biodefense*) A bi-partisan group of U.S. Senators have introduced the Public Health Emergency Response and Accountability Act to create a permanent funding mechanism to ensure quick and effective responses to future public health emergencies.

Public health challenges such as Zika, Ebola, and now coronavirus, will continue to arise, and the ability to respond to them in a timely fashion is critical. The common pattern over the years has been similar in each case – an outbreak of infectious disease or other public health emergency occurs, and the world community is taken by surprise.

The act calls for a permanent ability for federal response agencies—including the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR), the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and other federal departments – to respond proactively to better track and get ahead of infectious diseases and other public health emergencies before they spread.

This *Public Health Emergency Response and Accountability Act* would provide automatic funding for the existing Public Health Emergency Fund in section 319 of the *Public Health Service Act* based on a formula that is similar to the budget authority provided for FEMA. These funds would be available for response after a public health emergency regarding an infectious disease, bioterrorist attack, or disaster that is declared by the HHS secretary, which guarantees that the money will be used to address truly imminent threats to public health. Additionally, the bill includes safeguards that the funding will be spent according to best practices learned from previous responses to public health emergencies, appropriated based on historic needs, and properly accounted for through robust accountability and oversight mechanisms for expended funds.

Full story: https://globalbiodefense.com/2020/02/20/permanent-funding-mechanism-for-public-health-emergencies-introduced-in-new-legislation/

Eastern Kentucky Has Been Underwater, but You Probably Didn't Notice
An out-of-sight, out-of-mind mentality can take hold when people lose their connection to nature.
Drone video footage: https://youtu.be/nNSoHeCO1wo
Story link: https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/02/eastern-kentucky-is-underwater-but-you-probably-didnt-notice/606973/

Kentucky bill gives more document choice for Real ID

(WDRB) -- A bill introduced Wednesday in the Kentucky General Assembly would expand the list of documents people can use when applying for the Real ID driver's licenses. House Bill 453 adds current property tax bills, car registrations and existing driver's licenses to the acceptable forms of ID Kentuckians can present to prove their name and address.

Read more: https://www.wdrb.com/in-depth/kentucky-bill-gives-more-document-choice-for-real-id/article_11e4c256-53e3-11ea-bd5f-8bee7d082717.html

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House passes medical marijuana bill in first approval of its kind in Kentucky

(Courier-Journal) House Bill 136 would allow doctors to prescribe cannabis and set up a regulatory framework for patients to obtain it at approved dispensaries. The renamed Department of Alcoholic Beverage and Cannabis Control would implement and regulate the new state program.

Story link: https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/politics/ky-legislature/2020/02/20/kentucky-house-passes-medical-marijuana-bill-historic-vote/4819639002/

Ink Rx? Welcome to the camouflaged world of paramedical tattoos.

Mark Bertram lost the tips of two fingers in a construction accident last year. Bertram was trapped in a fan belt at work when the tips of his fingers were severed off. Eric Catalano tattooed fingernails for Bertram. (COURTESY OF ERIC CATALANO)

(Kaiser) Doctors specialize in the science of healing, but tattoo artist Eric Catalano specializes in the art of it. The single father of three does up to eight reconstructive medical tattoos for free each "Wellness Wednesday" in his small Illinois shop, drawing in nails on finger amputees, mocking up belly buttons after tummy tucks and fleshing out lips on a woman mauled by a dog.

Using tattoos to blend in rather than stand out is a relatively new field. A school started outside Atlanta about four years ago has trained more than 100 aspiring paramedical tattoo artists.

Catalano is self-taught. He uses the techniques he picked up years ago while helping breast cancer survivors who wanted tattoos of areolas — the dark area around nipples — after having mastectomies. Those tattoos are among the most common paramedical requests.

Catalano doesn't charge for paramedical tattoos. A GoFundMe page established last year brought in more than $12,000, allowing Catalano to donate his skills for the time being.

Learn more: https://khn.org/news/ink-rx-welcome-to-the-camouflaged-world-of-paramedical-tattoos/

OSHA Did You Know?: The deadline for employers to electronically submit their 2019 Summary of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses (OSHA Form 300A) is March 2.

North Korean Malicious Cyber Activity

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the Cyber National Mission Force (CNMF) have identified the following malware variants used by the North Korean government. The U.S. Government refers to malicious cyber activity by the North Korean government as HIDDEN COBRA.

- HOPLIGHT (update)
- BISTROMATH
- SLICKSHOES
- HOTCROISSANT
- ARTFULPIE
- BUFFETLINE
- CROWDEDFLOUNDER

CISA encourages users and administrators to review the Malware Analysis Reports for each malware variant listed above and the North Korean Malicious Cyber Activity page for more information.