



**NATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY ORGANIZATION
LIAISON OFFICE APO, JAPAN**

BRIEF REPORT ON PRODUCTIVITY TALK ON
HOW KOREA HAS BEEN HANDLING THE COVID-19 SITUATION

Date: 16th April, 2020

Expert 1: Dr. Wonjae Lee, Assistant Professor at the International Healthcare Center, Seoul National University Hospital, South Korea

Expert 2: Mr. Karlo B. Nograles, Cabinet Secretary, Republic of the Philippines

Presentation/ Discussions by Dr. Wonjae Lee

Dr. Wonjae Lee, in his presentation briefed that the South Korea has shown determination in the phase of virus testing. From a sudden spike in number of cases to its decision to implement widespread testing, South Korea has proved itself able in responding quickly and decisively. The first 30 cases identified in South Korea were handled in a steady and diligent manner. When COVID-19 hit South Korea, testing became the course of action that seems to have set the country apart from other nations. Unlike Italy, China, the UK and parts of the US, there was no lockdown in South Korea, however, it did closed its schools.

There have been postponed attempts at reopening schools. Providing protective equipment to medical staff was the first step in the fight against the virus at government level. South Korean hospitals are properly equipped to prevent infection among physicians and medical staff at hospitals so that they can safely test and treat patients with COVID-19. Once the highly contagious nature of COVID-19 became known, South Korea reorganized their medical system to minimize people-to-people infections at hospitals. First, when someone shows symptoms of COVID-19, they are directed to call the public health hotline, which can assess the symptoms and provide an initial assessment by phone.

The lessons learned from 2015 MERS outbreak facilitated the development of rapid responses such as drive-through testing sites that help reduce testing time and protect medical staff. The medical care is focused on treating those with severe symptoms, which lowered the mortality rate of COVID-19 in Korea. There are different perceptions that when this virus will end, however, what we need to know are the ways we need to live under this scenario with caution.

Presentation/ Discussions by Mr. Karlo B. Nograles

Mr. Karlo B. Nograles briefed that on 30 January 2020, the Philippines Department of Health reported the first case of COVID-19 in the country with a 38-year-old female Chinese national. On 7 March, the first local transmission of COVID-19 was confirmed. According to the World Health Organization, 80 percent of patients only experience mild illness and recover. Around 14 percent go through severe symptoms while five percent fall critically ill.

Due to its proximity to China, the Philippines is at a far greater risk of witnessing increased cases of the novel coronavirus infection compared to other countries. The Philippines is also home to hundreds of workers from China working in the Philippine. More than 230,000 migrant Filipinos often referred to as Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) are also working in China, particularly Hong Kong and Macau as household workers. A temporary ban was imposed on the workers from travelling to China or its special administrative regions after the coronavirus outbreak on 2 February. The ban was lifted on 18th February.

More than 6,000 people have caught the virus between January 30 and mid-April, while over 600 patients have recovered so far. The death toll stands at more than 400. Authorities had imposed strict lockdown, which forced millions of Filipinos indoors and some out of jobs and have somewhat slowed down the number of infections. The Philippines government is taking several steps to control the spread of the virus, including travel restrictions, closure of schools and colleges, as well as training schools of the Philippines National Police. The challenging situation created with Covid-19 is a strong incentive and a reminder to all on how important healthcare is, and that scientific innovation is needed in all fields of medical care. The expert said that responding quickly to the crisis, Govt. has redirected all its work streams to address the crisis. Its monitoring work will now be directed towards tracking case infection demographics and the effectiveness of community mitigation policies. Its local government and community engagement activities will be redirected towards supporting local government units to cope with the crisis by developing strategies to implement guidelines for existing and proposed mitigation strategies.

Recommendations

Korea & Philippines should intensify surveillance for unusual outbreaks and monitor carefully the evolution of COVID-19 outbreaks, reinforcing healthcare surveillance. Both the countries should continue to enhance awareness through effective risk communication concerning COVID-19 to the general public, health professionals, and policy makers, and to avoid actions that promote stigma or discrimination. Both the countries are reminded of the purpose of the International Health Regulations to prevent, protect against, control and provide a public health response to the international spread of disease in ways that are commensurate with restricted public health risks, and avoid unnecessary international traffic and trade.

Questions & Answers

Question 1 Should we under-react or over react the preventive measures?

Answer It varies from country to country. In an uneducated and less civilized society where social awareness is mandatory one has to over react the preventive measure.

Question 2 What is the long term preventive measure and when this pandemic will come to an end?

Answer Many says it's going to be a year. But the fact is that no one knows it yet for sure. The core strategy is that same practices need to be repeated and should be intact. Reaching the right people at the right time is the need of time.