

## Short Communication

### COVID-19: Current Situation in Pakistan

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The 2019–20 coronavirus pandemic was confirmed to have reached Pakistan in February 2020. As of 26 March 2020, the number of confirmed cases in the country is 1,252, with 23 recoveries and 9 deaths.<sup>1</sup> After declaration of the COVID-19 epidemic, Pakistan government took several measures to cope with this zoonotic illness. Federal government, in collaboration with the Civil Aviation Authority, established a system to screen every passenger who had traveled directly or indirectly from infected countries. After the importation of COVID19 from Iran, Pakistan also started closed monitoring and more active screening of passengers travelling from Iran.<sup>2</sup> The National Institute of Health (NIH), Islamabad acted before the cases appear in country. NIH established Emergency Operation Centre Field Epidemiology & Disease Surveillance Division. An initial response mechanism was streamlined with all the relevant stakeholders in order to address the outbreak in case of its occurrence in the country and issued first advisory for COVID-19 on 21st January, 2020 followed by subsequent revisions. NIH played its role in devising and circulating protocols regarding COVID-19 prevention, transmission and defection, as well as launching public awareness campaigns.<sup>3</sup> Currently, Pakistan is capable of testing samples from suspected cases within the country at the main diagnostic laboratory at the NIH [11], and also at 15 designated COVID-19 test centers (4 centers in Karachi, 3 in Lahore, 2 in Quetta, and one center each in Peshawar, Islamabad, Multan, Sukkar, Muzaffarabad and Gilgit Baltistan).<sup>1</sup>

Alongside of diagnostic and treatment facilities, Government of Pakistan & the provincial governments have decided to strictly implement the policy of social distancing, after implementation of which, it is hoped that cases of COVID-19 will be reduced in coming days.

#### References

1. <http://covid.gov.pk/stats>
2. Saqlain M, Munir MM, Ahmed A, Tahir AH. Is Pakistan prepared to tackle the coronavirus epidemic? *Drugs Ther Perspect* 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40267-020-00721-1>
3. <https://www.nih.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/NIH-response-1.pdf>

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Additional notes:

**17.3.20:**

Civil Aviation Authority issued a notice with effect from 21.3.20. All international passengers to Pakistani airports shall be required to produce a copy of test result for covid-19 through RT-PCR;

Pakistan closed all international Borders on 23.3.20; Country went into lockdown starting with Sindh province on 23.3.20, followed by Punjab & KP. Pakistan army has been mobilized in aid of civilian Government.

**27.3.20:**

A decree was passed, in consultation with religious leaders to limit congregation prayers to maximum 5 people in Sindh province. In the rest of Pakistan Government urged people to avoid congregation prayers in mosques.

Other measures: China assistance is sought in procuring masks, PPE and medical equipment.

Field hospitals are being established in 4 to 5 star hotels across the country. Schools are being converted to quarantine centers. Government has announced economic package for daily wagers of Rs3000 per month.

**27.3.20:**

All across country, white flags were displayed to salute the courage of medical staff at the forefront with meagre PPE. A junior doctor Osama Riaz died on 22.3.20 after contracting Covid-19 in northern Pakistan in the line of duty.

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