

China virus: What we know about the fatalities

January 23 2020



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The first fatality of China's new virus would come to represent a common set of traits for those who died to the disease: he was over the age of 60 and in poor health.

Since China reported the emergence of a new coronavirus at the end of December, the SARS-like virus has infected more than 500 and killed 17.

So far, the majority of the victims were elderly individuals with pre-existing health conditions, such as diabetes and liver cirrhosis.

All hailed from central Hubei province, where a local seafood market in the capital city of Wuhan is believed to be the epicentre of the epidemic.

But while older individuals have died from the Wuhan virus, some younger patients—including a 10-year-old boy—have since been released from the hospital.

Here's what we know so far about the deaths:

Most victims were over 60

According to details released by China's National Health Commission (NHC) on Thursday, the 17 victims of the virus were between 48 and 89 years old.

Only two were under the age of 60, while the average age of the victims was 73.

Most of them died this week, according to the NHC.

Among those who have been discharged from the hospital were younger patients, including a 35-year-old man from Shenzhen, a bustling tech hub in southern Guangdong province.

He was released from the hospital on Thursday, according to the local health commission, as well as the 10-year-old boy who had visited

relatives in Wuhan before falling ill.

Many had pre-existing health conditions

Many of those who died from the virus also had pre-existing health issues before contracting the Wuhan disease, such as diabetes and hypertension.

One man, an 86-year-old who was hospitalised on January 9, had surgery for colon cancer four years prior, on top of suffering from high blood pressure and diabetes.

Another, an 80-year-old woman surnamed Hu, had Parkinson's Disease and more than 20 years of high blood pressure and diabetes in her medical history.

Some were hospitalised for weeks before dying

Several of the 17 victims were hospitalised for weeks before dying—raising questions on the preparedness of hospitals that may have to treat patients for long periods of time.

The youngest victim of the Wuhan virus, a woman surnamed Yin, was hospitalised for more than a month before succumbing to the virus.

On December 10, the 48-year-old woman reported a fever, coughing, body soreness, and fatigue, and underwent anti-infection treatment for two weeks, according to the NHC.

Later in the end of the month, Yin suffered shortness of breath and chest tightness, and she passed away on January 20.

Not all of them had a fever

Currently, Wuhan authorities are screening passengers for fever at the airport, railway stations, and bus terminals.

At four airports in Thailand, authorities introduced mandatory thermal scans of passengers arriving from high-risk areas of China.

But not all those who died after being infected reported a fever before being hospitalised, according to the NHC.

A 66-year-old man surnamed Luo reported a "mainly dry cough" but no fever on December 22 before suffering from shortness of breath more than a week later.

By mid-January, Luo required a ventilator to help him breathe.

"A major concern is the range of severity of symptoms this virus is causing," said Dr Jeremy Farrar, Director of the Wellcome Trust.

"It is clear some people are being affected and are infectious while experiencing only very mild symptoms or possibly without experiencing symptoms at all," he said in an emailed statement.

"This may be masking the true numbers infected and the extent of person to person transmission," he added.

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