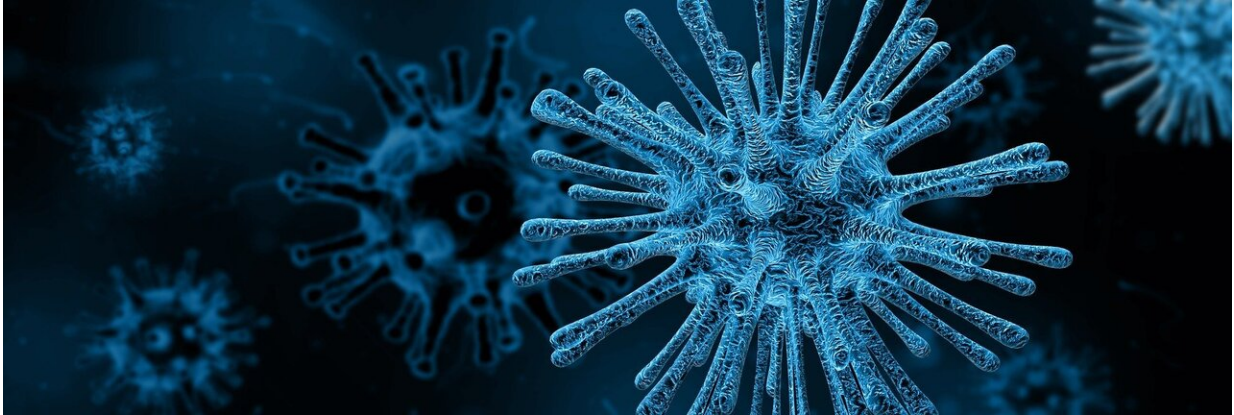


WHO experts visit Chinese virus epicentre

February 24 2020



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Experts from the World Health Organization have visited the locked-down central Chinese city at the epicentre of the deadly global coronavirus outbreak, Chinese authorities said Monday.

The trip over the weekend is the first reported visit to Wuhan by the WHO since the virus emerged from the city of 11 million people late last year.

COVID-19, which is suspected to have crossed from animals to humans at a market in Wuhan, has killed more than 2,500 people across China and spread around the world.

The international group of experts led by the WHO inspected two hospitals during their visit, including a makeshift one at a sports centre, the National Health Commission said on Monday.

They also met with Ma Xiaowei, the director of China's national health commission, and top officials at the centre for [disease control](#) for Hubei province, of which Wuhan is the capital.

China has quarantined Wuhan and other cities in Hubei, blocking tens of millions of residents from travelling, since late January, to try and contain the virus.

Most of the deaths have been in Wuhan.

Multiple provinces have reported zero new infections for several days in a row, even as the situation continues to worsen in parts of Hubei and outside of China.

Wuhan on Monday accounted for 348 of the 409 new virus cases reported in China, while five cities and the Shennongjia Forestry District in Hubei reported no new cases.

The WHO team arrived in China more than a week ago to observe research and testing efforts, so they could then help with recommendations for fighting the epidemic, the National Health Council said previously.

The WHO has praised Beijing for its handling of the epidemic.

But China has been criticised at home for silencing early warnings from a whistleblower doctor who later died from the virus.

The United States has also called for more transparency.

China's numbers of daily new infections have been on a [downward trend](#), but [health authorities](#) have sowed confusion about the data by repeatedly changing counting methods.

There have been more than 77,000 confirmed infections in China.

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