

Spain's hospitals at breaking point, US cities brace

March 30 2020, by Aritz Parra and David Rising



Spanish Army soldiers mount a tent to be used by hospital patients during the coronavirus outbreak in Madrid, Spain, Monday, March 30, 2020. Bells tolled in Madrid's deserted central square and flags were lowered in a day of mourning Monday as Spain raced to build field hospitals to treat an onslaught of coronavirus patients. The new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms for most people, but for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness or death. (AP Photo/Bernat Armangue)

Bells tolled in Madrid's deserted central square and flags were lowered in a day of mourning Monday as Spain raced to build field hospitals to treat an onslaught of coronavirus patients. In the U.S., the government's top infectious-disease expert warned that smaller cities are about to see cases "take off" the way they have in New York City.

A U.S. Navy hospital ship with 1,000 beds arrived in New York to help relieve the crisis gripping the city. The USNS Comfort—also sent to New York City after 9/11—will be used to treat non-[coronavirus](#) patients while packed hospitals deal with those with COVID-19.

In Japan, officials announced a new date for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics—the summer of 2021—as a spike in reported infections fueled suspicions that the government was understating the extent of the country's outbreak in recent weeks while it was still hoping to salvage the Summer Games.

Moscow locked down its 12 million people as Russia braced for sweeping nationwide restrictions. Israel said 70-year-old Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is quarantining himself after an aide tested positive for the virus. And in Britain, Prince Charles, the heir to the throne who tested positive for the virus, ended his period of isolation and is in [good health](#), his office said.

In another bit of positive news, new numbers released in Italy showed a continued slowdown in the rate of new confirmed cases and a record number of people cured in that hard-hit country. And the World Health Organization's emergencies chief said cases in both Italy and Spain were "potentially stabilizing"—while warning that this is no time to let up on tough containment measures.



The Navy hospital ship USNS Comfort arrives in New York, Monday, March 30, 2020. The ship has 1,000 beds and 12 operating rooms that could be up and running within 24 hours of its arrival on Monday morning. It's expected to bolster a besieged health care system by treating non-coronavirus patients while hospitals treat people with COVID-19. (AP Photo/Seth Wenig)

Three-quarters of a million people around the world have become infected and over 35,000 have died, according to a running count kept by Johns Hopkins University. The U.S. reported over 140,000 infections and more than 2,500 deaths, with New York City the worst hot spot.

Spain overtook China in reported coronavirus infections as the outbreak stretched scores of Spanish hospitals to their breaking point. With a

population of 47 million people to China's 1.4 billion, Spain saw its official tally of infections climb past 85,000. It also reported over 800 new deaths, for an overall toll of more than 7,300.

Experts say those figures—and those in every other country—are much lower than the true numbers, because of limited testing, counting irregularities and mild cases that have been missed. Many coronavirus deaths in Spain and Italy that happen at home or at nursing homes are not even counted.



Iraqi health ministry workers carry a coffin of a person who died from coronavirus at a new cemetery for the people who died from Covid-19 outside the town of Najaf, Iraq, Monday, March 30, 2020. (AP Photo/Anmar Khalil)

Italy reported that more than 800 people had died in the past day, bringing the country's death toll to nearly 11,600. It added over 4,000 new infections, but also a record 1,590 cured.

"We are saving lives by staying at home, by maintaining social distance, by traveling less and by closing schools," said Dr. Luca Richeldi, a lung specialist.

WHO's emergencies chief said the caseloads in Italy and Spain might be leveling off. "It is our fervent hope that that is the case," Dr. Michael Ryan said. "But we have to now push the virus down, and that will not happen by itself."

At least six of Spain's 17 regions were at their limit of intensive care unit beds, and three more were close to it, authorities said. Crews of workers were frantically building more field hospitals.

Nearly 15% of all those infected in Spain, almost 13,000 people, are [health care workers](#), hurting hospitals' efforts to help the tsunami of people gasping for breath.



A worker moves items at a Federal Medical Station for hospital surge capacity set up at Temple University's Liacouras Center in Philadelphia, Monday, March 30, 2020. (AP Photo/Matt Rourke)

In hard-hit Madrid, flags were lowered to half-staff for an official mourning period. During a minute of silence for the dead, Madrid's Puerta del Sol square was empty as bells tolled.

In the U.S. on Sunday, as deaths in New York state surpassed 1,000, the majority of them in New York City, President Donald Trump extended stay-at-home recommendations for a month in an abrupt turnaround from his previous stance.

The move came after Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National

Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said up to 200,000 Americans could die and millions become infected if lockdowns and social distancing did not continue.

On Monday, Fauci said on ABC's "Good Morning America" that cities like New Orleans and Detroit are ripe for the kind of acceleration that has occurred in New York City. But he said he is also concerned about other, smaller cities across the country that are merely "sort of percolating" now.



A robot advises clients at a supermarket about appropriate behaviour in times of the coronavirus outbreak in Lindlar, Germany, Monday, March 30, 2020. The new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms for most people, but for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can

cause more severe illness or death. (AP Photo/Martin Meissner)

"What we've learned from painful experience with this outbreak is that it goes along almost on a straight line, then a little acceleration, acceleration, then it goes way up," he said, adding: "We're going to have all of these little mini-outbreaks throughout various cities in our country."

In a sign of the mounting economic toll exacted by the virus, Macy's said it would stop paying tens of thousands of employees thrown out of work when the chain closed its more than 500 department stores earlier this month.

The majority of its 130,000 workers will still collect health benefits, but the company said it is switching to the "absolute minimum workforce" needed to maintain basic operations.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. But for others, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, the virus can cause severe symptoms like pneumonia. More than 150,000 people have recovered, according to Johns Hopkins.



A member of the medical staff, wearing full protective equipment, helps a co-worker to remove his protective suit in the triage area of the polyclinic Klinikare during a partial lockdown against the spread of Covid-19 in Brussels, Monday, March 30, 2020. The new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms for most people, but for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness or death. (AP Photo/Francisco Seco)



Volunteer workers in a clothing factory manufacturing firefighting gear, make hospital gowns for medical staff to protect them from the coronavirus, in Arnedo, northern Spain, Monday, March 30, 2020. The new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms for most people, but for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness or death. (AP Photo/Alvaro Barrientos)



Officials wearing protective face masks and suits as a preventive measure against the spread of the coronavirus wait to load coffins of victims of Covid-19, to hearse trucks outside a morque in Istanbul, Monday, March 30, 2020. The new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms for most people, but for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness or death. (AP Photo/Emrah Gurel)



A municipal worker sprays disinfectant in the Grand Market of Dakar, Senegal in an attempt to halt the spread of the new coronavirus Monday, March 30, 2020. The new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms for most people, but for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness or death. (AP Photo/Sylvain Cherkoui)



Palestinians make protective overalls meant to shield people from the coronavirus, to be exported to Israel, at a local factory, in Gaza City, Monday, March 30, 2020. (AP Photo/Adel Hana)



Undertaker Mari Carmen Serrador, 53 years old, protecting herself with a mask at Salvador cemetery during the coronavirus outbreak, near to Vitoria, northern Spain, Monday, March 30, 2020. The new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms for most people, but for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness or death. AP Photo/Alvaro Barrientos)



A woman wearing a face mask to protect against coronavirus, passes in front of graffiti painted on the shutter of a closed restaurant during a lockdown order by the Greek government to control the spread of the virus, in Athens, Monday, March 30, 2020. Greece's prime minister is calling on all his cabinet ministers and the lawmakers of his center-right New Democracy party to donate 50% of their salaries over the next two months to the fight against the spread of the new coronavirus. (AP Photo/Thanassis Stavrakis)



A man wearing a protective suit sanitizes the elevator of a public housing building to prevent the spreading of the coronavirus, in the neighborhood of Spinaceto, on the outskirts of Rome, Monday, March 30, 2020. The new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms for most people, but for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness or death. (Mauro Scrobogna/LaPresse via AP)



A volunteer disinfects a Hindu temple in an effort to contain the outbreak of the coronavirus, in Karachi, Pakistan, Monday, March 30, 2020. The virus causes mild or moderate symptoms for most people, but for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness or death. (AP Photo/Fareed Khan)



Health workers prepare to conduct a drive-through COVID-19 test for people at KPJ Damansara Specialist Hospital, in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, Monday, March 30, 2020. The Malaysian government issued a restricted movement order to the public till April 14, to help curb the spread of the new coronavirus. The new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms for most people, but for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness or death. (AP Photo/Vincent Thian)



The Olympic rings are reflected on the facade of Japan Olympic Museum Monday, March 30, 2020, in Tokyo. The Tokyo Olympics will open next year in the same time slot scheduled for this year's games. Tokyo organizers said Monday the opening ceremony will take place on July 23, 2021. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong)

In Italy, coronavirus patient Andrea Napoli, 33, said he didn't remotely expect that he would be hospitalized, struggling for his life, since he was young and fit. But what he saw shocked him.

While he was being treated in Rome, three patients died in his ward. He saw doctors stressed and exhausted from the long hours, out of breath from pushing equipment around, dressed in protective masks, suits and gloves.

"What I saw was a lot, a lot of pain. It was very hard," Napoli said. "I heard screams from the other rooms, constant coughing from the other rooms."

China on Monday reported 31 new COVID-19 cases, among them just one domestic infection. At the peak of China's restrictions, some 700 million people were ordered to stay home, but those rules are being eased.

Japanese automaker Toyota halted production at its auto plants in Europe, but all of its factories in China resumed work on Monday.

© 2020 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.

Citation: Spain's hospitals at breaking point, US cities brace (2020, March 30) retrieved 9 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-03-spain-hospitals-cities-brace.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--