



NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Division of the National Health Laboratory Service

CORONAVIRUS COMMUNICATION TRAINING

11 MARCH 2020





INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this presentation is to educate you on some of the most effective tools of communication during an outbreak. The presentation will contextualise the current global coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak which emanated from China and subsequently has spread to other parts of the world, including South Africa.

The presentation will cover the following:

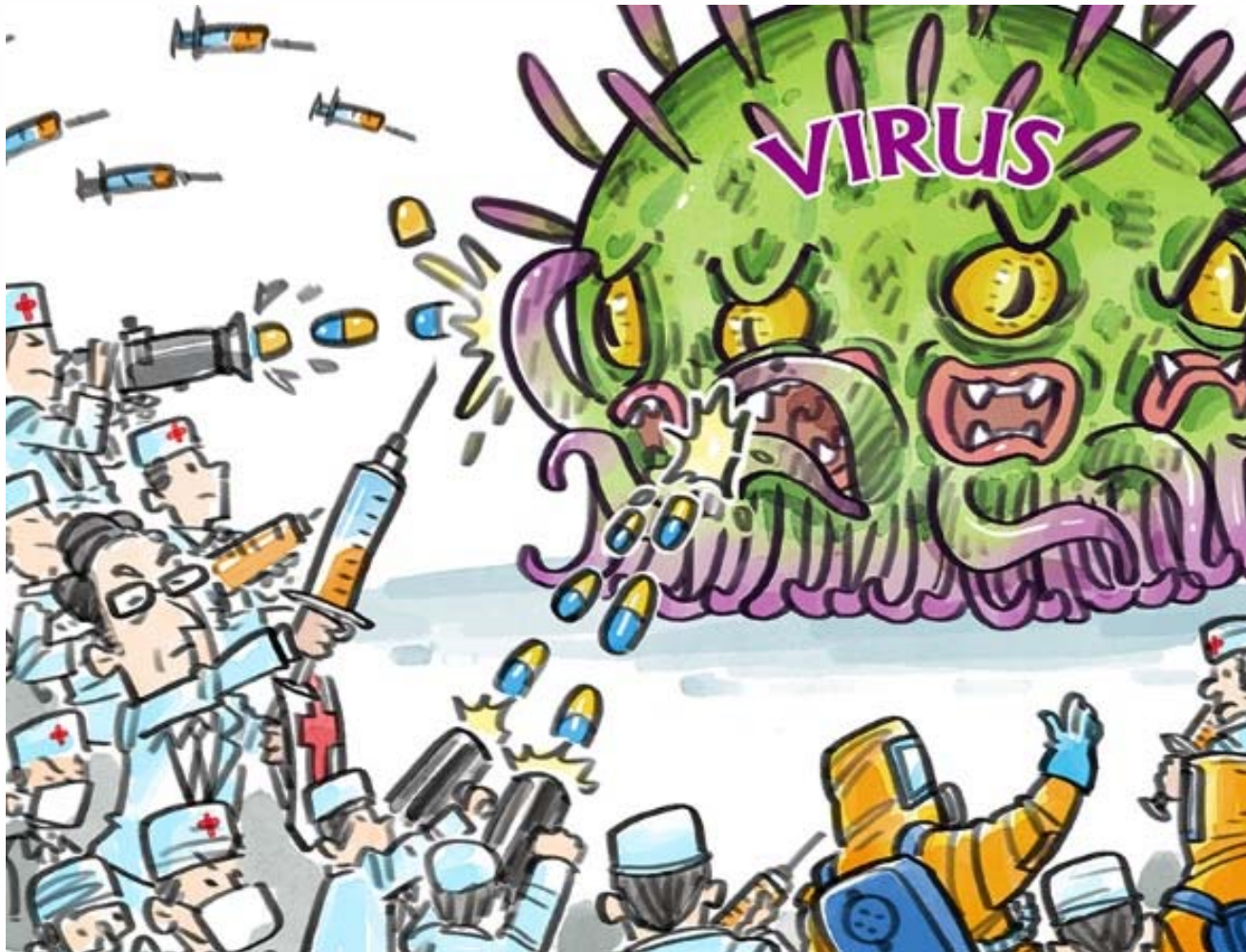
- Communicating coronavirus (frequently asked questions)
- The role of public health communication during an outbreak
- Channels of communication (where to communicate)
- Rumour management (how do we stop the spread of disinformation and fake news)
- Resources and tools (additional information about COVID-19)





COMMUNICATING CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)







What is COVID-19



Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) belongs to a group of coronaviruses across the world identified in animals (such as the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV)) but only a small number of these can cause disease in humans.

The name corona refers to a crown because these viruses have crown-like spikes on their surface when viewed under an electron microscope. On 7 January 2020, **severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)** was confirmed as the causative agent of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Sometimes coronaviruses infecting animals can evolve to cause disease in humans and become a new (novel) coronavirus for humans.

The majority of the case-patients initially identified were dealers and vendors at seafood, poultry and live wildlife market (Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market) in Jiangnan District of Hubei Province. This suggests that the novel coronavirus has a possible zoonotic origin. However, there has been ongoing sustained transmission of COVID-19 in countries to date. The specific source of the virus is not yet known.





How is COVID-19 transmitted?



It is thought to happen mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how influenza and other respiratory pathogens spread. Thus far the majority of cases have occurred in people with close physical contact to cases and healthcare workers caring for patients with COVID-19.

What are the signs and symptoms of SARS-CoV-2 infection in humans?

Current symptoms reported for patients with COVID-19 have included mild to severe respiratory illness with cough, sore throat, shortness of breath or fever [$\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$ (measured) or history of fever (subjective)]. The complete clinical picture with regard to COVID-19 is still not fully clear. Reported illnesses have ranged from infected people with little to no symptoms to people being severely ill and dying.





How is COVID-19 diagnosed?

COVID-19 is diagnosed by a laboratory test, polymerase chain reaction (PCR) molecular test, on a respiratory tract sample (e.g. sample from nose, throat or chest). For specific guidance on sample collection and transport please visit the NICD's website: <http://www.nicd.ac.za/diseases-a-z-index/novel-coronavirus-infection/>





What qualifies a person to be investigated?



Persons with acute respiratory illness with sudden onset of at least one of the following: cough, sore throat, shortness of breath or fever [$\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$ (measured) or history of fever (subjective)] irrespective of admission status

AND

In the 14 days prior to onset of symptoms, met at least one of the following epidemiological criteria:

Were in close contact¹ with a confirmed² or probable³ case of SARS-CoV-2 infection;

OR

Had a history of travel to areas with local transmission of SARS-CoV-2; (NB Affected countries will change with time, consult the NICD website for current updates);

OR

Worked in, or attended a health care facility where patients with SARS-CoV-2 infections were being treated

OR

Admitted with severe pneumonia of unknown aetiology





How is COVID-19 infection treated?



Treatment is supportive (e.g. provide oxygen for patients with shortness of breath or treatment for fever). There is no specific antiviral treatment available. Antibiotics do not treat viral infections. However, antibiotics may be required if a bacterial secondary infection develops.

What measures have been put in place in South Africa to minimise the risk of transmission should cases be imported

Fever screening is in place at international airports. If there is a suspected case, procedures are in place for case isolation and management as well as rapid specimen collection and transport so that the diagnosis can quickly be made. Suspected cases will be managed at designated hospitals with isolation facilities. Protocols are in place for follow up of case contacts to ensure that the virus does not spread.



How can SARS-CoV-2 infection in humans be prevented?



Currently, there is no vaccine for COVID-19. Officials in China have intensified efforts to contain the spread of the virus. There are no specific measures currently recommended to prevent COVID-19 but the following can provide protection against infection with coronaviruses and many other viruses that are more common in South Africa:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay at home when you are sick and try and keep distance from others at home.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a flexed elbow or a tissue, then throw the tissue in the bin.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Avoid contact with farm or wild animals (alive or dead), animal markets, and products that come from animals (such as uncooked meat).





Should I travel to China now?

It has been recommended that travellers should avoid all nonessential travel to areas with ongoing sustained transmission of COVID-19 including Mainland China (all provinces), Hong Kong, Japan, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Vietnam, Taiwan, Italy and the Islamic Republic of Iran. People who travel to China or areas ongoing sustained transmission of COVID-19 should avoid visiting the animal markets (avoid contact with farm or wild animals), products that come from animals (such as uncooked meat) and avoid contact with sick people.

Who can I contact for more information?

Visit the NICD website at www.nicd.ac.za for further information. For medical/clinical related queries by health care professionals only, contact the NICD Hotline +27 (0) 82 883 9920 (for use by healthcare professionals only). For laboratory related queries call the Centre for Respiratory Diseases and Meningitis (011-555- 0315/7/8 or 011-555-0488).

Guidelines and case definitions are available on the NICD website <http://www.nicd.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/COVID-19-Quick-reference-27-01-2020-Final.pdf>





THE ROLE OF PUBLIC HEALTH COMMUNICATION DURING OUTBREAKS







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Communication plays an imperative role during an outbreak, it is the means through which we disseminate information and have meaningful exchanges. Through communication we achieve our goals and intentions, reaching to people who are distant from us. When communicating during an outbreak we seek to:

- **Allay public fears**
- **Assure communities of the work that health agencies are doing**
 - **Mitigate rumours and disinformation**
- **Offer preventative solutions and procedures for recovery**
 - **Show credibility and openness**





Through communication, our successful messages seek to give:

- Empathy and caring,
- Honesty and openness,
- Dedication and commitment, and
- Competence and expertise





CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION





Internet



Broadcast



Mobile



Newspaper



Social



Clip Video



Mail



Promotion



CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION



Communication channels and communication tools play a fundamental role in determining the impact of communication pertaining to, access, reach, engagement, and monitoring. When selecting channels of communication, it is always necessary to map out your target audience according to their needs, demographic requirements, gaps, and medium.

Often, the exercise of mapping communication should be governed by media buying principles and applications that best serve the desired output and meeting audience expectations.

The approach in health communication is often a soft sell approach, while some have tried to dramatize health, it often lacks the emotional appeal to be dealing with peoples.

Consider the following when choosing a tool of channels:

- Accessibility
- Efficiency
- Time
- Reach
- Usability
- Engagement and interaction
- Measurability





RUMOUR MANAGEMENT





RUMOUR MANAGEMENT



Rumours are hearsays, invalidated information, often crafted to misinform, spread outrage and public fear. The advent of rumours has spread to big and notable developments such as disinformation campaigns and fake news.

We are in a cold war fighting message tariffs, text banns and messaging trade battles.

People want a blame factor; who is responsible for this?

How to do to fight and manage rumours?

Identify, train and place brand ambassadors

Listen and surveillance rumours (where are they spreading?)

Identify rumours of concern (which rumours do we care about?)





Address the rumours

- Silence increases ambiguity and confusion
- Simply denying a rumour does not eliminate ambiguity; it may even increase it
- Address the rumour directly where needed
- Use credible spokespersons and speakers to address rumours

What to do?

- Communicate and engage early
- Be transparent
- Listen to their concerns
- Provide information on what is being done
- Let the community know that they are part of the solution

The two factors that influence a rumour are its importance to the listener and its ambiguity.





RESOURCES





NICD Website

www.nicd.ac.za

NICD Hotline

0800 029 999 (for the general public)

082 883 9920 (for use by healthcare professionals only).

Laboratory related queries call the Centre for Respiratory Diseases and Meningitis

(011-555- 0315/7/8 or 011-555-0488)

World Health Organization

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/events-as-they-happen>





DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN



Target Audience	COVID-19 information needs and requirements	Communication objectives	Key communication messages	Communication tool	Communication channels and platforms	Implementation deadline	Monitoring and evaluation
Commercial Media (paid media)							
Print (newspapers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General knowledge of COVID-19: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preventative measures Symptoms identification and reporting Contacting the NICD and finding out more information Ongoing surveillance, management and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broadening awareness of COVID-19 knowledge and response uptake on the responsibilities of the media in informing the public Engaging media to play an essential role in encouraging the public to adhere to COVID-19 preventative measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing correct and timeous information on COVID-19 will minimise public fears and the spread of fake news Press media play an important role in shaping people's perceptions and view of COVID-19 One of the ways to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 is to share information on transmission and preventative measures your audiences should exercise 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NICD website Media releases 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NICD website insights: the number of page views on alerts The number of inquiries made in response to a media release Coverage of the NICD
Television	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General knowledge of COVID-19: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Symptoms identification and reporting COVID-19 response and surveillance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measures put in place to identify and respond to a suspected case 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assisting the public to recognise and identify symptoms of COVID-19 and where to seek help Communicating ongoing daily response activities to capacitate trust in response to a COVID-19 phenomenon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do your viewers know how to identify COVID-19 symptoms and where to get help? Communicating information about COVID-19 preparedness will strengthen the viewer's interest and in turn increase participation of your programming 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NICD website COVID-19 videos Media release Social media 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NICD website insights: the number of page views on alerts The number of inquiries made in response to a media release Coverage of the NICD Social media insights: the number of





QUESTION?





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