

Mitigating the Impact of the Coronavirus on Caribbean Tourism and Residents Webinar

Tuesday, February 4th, 2020 10AM EST

CARPHA Responses to Questions raised by participants

1. From Ruth Myles: does this virus last on mail? we receive a lot of mail from China and would like to know if there is a protocol on handling mail.
 - a. The coronavirus is not enveloped in the same way that a flu virus is. This makes it fragile in the environment. It does not last long on surfaces. It is susceptible to normal environmental cleaning agents like bleach, soap, and alcohol cleaners. We assume that mail handlers practice good hand hygiene and wear gloves, which would provide some protection from spreading germs with their hands.
2. From Patrick van den Berg: will the blood pressure be affected?
 - a.
3. From Alpha Stafford: Can we have information on people who have survived and what is the motility rate
 - a. As of Tuesday afternoon, it has been reported 20,704 cases and 407 deaths. That comes to roughly 1.97% mortality rate. Johns Hopkins University statistics. <https://gisanddata.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>
 - b. China's Centre for Disease Prevention (CCDC) reported on 4 Feb that of the 632 cases have recovered. If this is calculating is based on severe cases (N = 2788) then 23% of severe cases to date have recovered (China CDC Epi Update 4 Feb). <http://weekly.chinacdc.cn/news/TrackingtheEpidemic.htm#NHCFeb04>
4. From Patricia Affonso-Dass: Are the same levels of screening taking place at private airports or for private or charter flights?
 - a. Dr Joy St John: The CMS have been advised to implement the same protocols for the private flights.
5. From Sania Brown: Are there any noticeable differences between dengue symptoms and that of coronavirus?
 - a. Dr Joy St John: Dengue does not cause respiratory symptoms. You do not cough, sneeze or get pneumonia from dengue. The symptoms may look more like seasonal flu.
6. From Patricia Affonso-Dass: Are the locations for isolation facilities on each island public?
 - a. This question can only be answered by individual countries. It is unclear whether these are public or not.
7. From Patricia Affonso-Dass: Also how is screening being applied for private yachts?
 - a. CMS have been encouraged to monitor private yachts. CARPHA guidelines for conveyances has details on how to respond to various ships/ vessels <http://carpha.org/Portals/0/Documents/NCoVGuidelinesforConveyances.pdf>

8. From Keith Goddard: from media...should the governments make the quarantine centres public?
 - a. This is a decision for each country's National Disaster Committee / National Incident Control System to decide. Such decisions need to be taken by a multi-sectoral team with consideration for its implications and impact upon the response efforts.
9. From Clarice Modeste-Curwen: I believe this is a very timely intervention from CHTA and CARPHA, we share the concern about small seacraft entering our borders. Any possibility of a regional or sub-regional approach to this?
 - a. This question will be table at the next meeting of the Caribbean Regional Coordinating Mechanism for Health Security and feedback provided in due course. In the meantime, CMS should ensure that a whole-of-government approach is being taken to this response that includes key stakeholders in maritime and aviation, that can inform the consensus to this issue at the country level.
10. From Alona Greenidge: can this virus be transmitted through the eyes?
 - a. It is not clear how easily this virus spreads from person-to-person. Other coronaviruses spread when an infected person produces respiratory droplets from a sneeze or cough and those droplets are inhaled or land in another person's mouth. There have been no documented cases of this new coronavirus spreading through the eyes. If further information becomes available on this route of exposure that will be communicated to CMOs.
11. From Malinda Hassell: despite the measures being taken at point of entry for travelers from China do you foresee that the virus will start spreading more within the US, Europe etc.?
 - a. CARPHA is not able to predict this, due to the limited information available on the transmissibility of the virus and based on the relatively low spread outside of China to date. As information becomes available, we may be able to be more definitive in our response and predict the likely scenarios for the region. Until then, we encourage CMS to be ready to respond should this become the case.
12. From Orville Lovell: How long does the Coronavirus remain viable on surfaces? On cloth or a firm surface such a table?
 - a. This has not been well established. SARS and MERS are known to last a short time (about 3 hours) on hard and soft surfaces and can be easily killed with routine cleaning (soap and water plus disinfectant such as bleach). Several experts on experts123.com have referred to a preliminary study, by researchers in Hong Kong that found that both dried and liquid samples of the new coronavirus survived as long as 24 hours in the environment. Additional studies are under way to examine this important question.
<http://www.experts123.com/q/how-long-do-coronaviruses-survive-in-the-environment.html>

13. From Deepa Girdari: St. Lucia receives visitors via sea from the French territories, can anyone confirm whether the French Territories in the Caribbean are also observing the necessary protocols.
 - a. CARPHA guidance documents has been shared with the regional stakeholders including counterparts representing several French Antilles.
14. From Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Any special PPE for frontlines staff, ship pilots, agents-custom & immigration officials that board ships?
 - a. Personnel that come into direct contact or is likely to come in contact with someone experiencing symptoms should wear PPE (N95 respirator and gloves). Any personnel that can maintain a 1-meter space between themselves and the person experiencing symptoms should be protected. Most airports have a physical barrier/screen at Immigration Desks – this may provide some measure of protection. The PPE should be reserved for flights arriving from high risk destinations or if port officials receive information on suspected cases or exposed travelers to mainland China at this stage. Hand sanitizer gels should be provided for staff processing passengers – such as immigration and customs. Where PPE need to be rationalized, then frontline Port Health officials conducting screening and assessment of travelers should be prioritized for N95 respirators, and other PPE.
- Comment from Clarice Modeste-Curwen: We must be very proactive, but there is no need to panic. We just have to look at the statistics on other viral illnesses that present regionally and internationally from time to time.
- Comment from Philip Brathwaite: we as Hoteliers etc. needs to ensure that our Team Members in the front of house areas report any guest, who may show signs of coughs etc., so that management can make any queries.
 - b. Comment from CARPHA: This is a great point. CARPHA encourages hoteliers to train staff to identify guests with acute respiratory illness-type symptoms and provide advice on actions to be taken (such as see the nurse, seek medical attention, hygiene habits etc., register for THIS and report symptoms).
 - c. Information for travelers is available on CARPHA website http://carpha.org/Portals/0/Documents/nCoV_GuidelinesTravellers.pdf