



U.S.-Asia Institute Briefing on The Coronavirus

Wednesday, February 26, at 11 A.M. in Rayburn HOB

Event [Link](#)

Panelists

- **Dr. Jennifer Nuzzo**, DrPH, SM, Senior Scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security
- **Dr. Leana Wen**, MD, MSc, Visiting Professor at the George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health

COVID-19

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

- There is currently **no vaccine** to protect against COVID-19.
 - A vaccine for COVID-19 is likely more than a year away from being widely available.
- There is currently **no specific antiviral treatment** for COVID-19. People with COVID-19 can seek medical care to help relieve symptoms.
 - The National Institute of Health has just [begun a clinical trial](#) to evaluate an experimental treatment for COVID-19, *remdesivir*, developed by Gilead Sciences—an American biotechnology drug company. Clinical trials of remdesivir are also ongoing in China. So far, there is no solid data to indicate it can improve clinical outcomes.
- The **mortality rate of COVID-19 is approximately 2%**. Both panelists agreed the actual mortality rate is probably much lower than the current estimate.
- Important distinctions between seasonal influenza and COVID-19:

<u>Seasonal Influenza</u>	<u>COVID-19</u>
✓ Vaccine Available	X No Vaccine Available
✓ Treatments Available	X No Treatments Available
✓ Existing Medical Infrastructure	X No Existing Medical Infrastructure
✓ Mortality Rate <1%	X Mortality rate estimate ~2%

Multiple estimates [predict 40-70% of the world's population is likely to become infected this year](#). It is no longer a question “if” COVID-19 will spread across the U.S., but “when”.

Symptoms, Spread, and Immunity



- ❖ Symptoms can include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. COVID-19 positive individuals may exhibit mild or no symptoms while still being contagious.
- ❖ Currently, it is unclear if individuals can be immune to COVID-19, or if they can carry the virus but not become sick.
- ❖ COVID-19 fomites can likely survive on surfaces for up to two hours. The panelists agreed that the majority of cases will transmit from person to person, not from surface contamination. They also agreed that COVID-19 is unlikely to mutate.
- ❖ **Handwashing is currently the best defense against COVID-19.** Washing of hands consistently for at least 20 seconds with soap and water can reduce the likelihood of transmission by up to 60%.

Testing Strategies

- ❖ Testing for COVID-19 has been very limited.
- ❖ Issues with a government-created coronavirus test has limited the capacity of U.S. officials to rapidly increase testing. The small number of U.S. cases reflects limited testing, not the virus's actual spread.
- ❖ It is extremely likely that **cases of COVID-19 far exceed current confirmed cases**, both in the U.S. and across the globe.
- ❖ [U.S. guidelines](#) currently recommend testing only for a very narrow group of people—individuals that display respiratory symptoms and have recently traveled to China, or those who have had close contact with an infected person. Both panelists agree that **widespread testing is necessary to combat coronavirus.**

Confirmed Cases in the United States*

Travel-related	12
Person-to-person spread	2
Total confirmed cases	59**
Total tested	445

*as of February 26, 2020.

**42 cases are from the Princess Diamond Cruise ship.

Panel Recommendations

1. **Containment is no longer realistic**; efforts should be focused on mitigation of impact.
2. **Testing for COVID-19 must be dramatically expanded.**
3. **The response should constantly evolve** as new information becomes available about the epidemic.



- a. Dr. Wen believes that, so far, the U.S. response has been strong. Progression of COVID-19 does not indicate the response has been inadequate.
4. State and local **public health systems need serious and immediate support.**
 - a. Manufacturing of supplies to alleviate shortages of N-95 masks and hazmat suits remains a strong concern.
5. **Prepare for the likely closing of schools, businesses, and major disruptions to global supply chains.**

Other Resources

Live COVID-19 Trackers

- The Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins Whiting School of Engineering Coronavirus COVID-19 Global Cases Tracker
 - [Desktop](#)
 - [Mobile](#)

CDC Resources

- COVID-19 [Factsheet](#)
- COVID-19 [Situation Updates](#)
- [Recommendations for Prevention](#)

Live News Updates

- [New York Times](#)
- [Washington Post](#)
- [CNN](#)

Monitoring China

- [South China Morning Post's ongoing coverage](#)
- National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China's [Daily Briefing on Novel Coronavirus Cases in China](#)