

These events, as they unfolded in Wuhan in the last two weeks of December 2019 and into January 2020, demonstrate the **diligence of clinicians** who noticed clusters of unusual pneumonia, sent samples for screening where commercially available next-generation sequencing detected signs indicative of a new SARS-like coronavirus, and escalated their concerns about this cluster of unexplained disease to local health authorities. The local health authorities closed and cleaned the market that was suspected as a potential source of the virus.

Within a day of the local alert being issued to hospitals, it was noted in the media. The signal was picked up by other health authorities and by the global epidemic surveillance networks that constantly scour open sources around the world. There were thus **three routes** through which WHO became aware of the outbreak on 31 December 2019 – the Centers for Disease Control, Taiwan, China contacting WHO through the IHR (2005) reporting system after noting media references to the outbreak; the alert published on the ProMED website and picked up by the epidemic surveillance system; and the WHO Country Office in China noting the public bulletin from the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission.



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On 1 January 2020, WPRO formally requested further information; and on 3 January it requested verification under the IHR (2005) Article 10 procedures. The Chinese National Health Commission and the Country Office met for a technical briefing on 3 January and provided initial information about the first set of 44 reported cases during the briefing and by email. The WHO subsequently published a Twitter thread about the cases on 4 January, and on 5 January officially alerted all country governments through the IHR Event Information System, as well as issuing its first Disease Outbreak News notice on the cluster.

The Chinese authorities and WHO held a subsequent briefing on 11 January. The Country Office reached an agreement with Chinese authorities on 15 January to visit Wuhan. On 16 January, a further briefing was held, and a more complete list of case information was shared. The first WHO mission to Wuhan took place on 20–21 January.

In an announcement on national television on 20 January 2020 Chinese health experts confirmed publicly that human to human transmission was occurring and that health workers were among those who had become infected. Wuhan instituted a drastic