

COVID-19: WHO declares a pandemic, ECDC releases discharge technical guidance

World Health Organization World Health Organization 12 Mar 2020

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Takeaway

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic, noting that this assessment is based on case numbers (exceeding 118,000 in 114 countries, 4291 deaths).

All countries are urged to activate and scale up emergency response mechanisms.

Why this matters

Clinicians are urged to be prepared to “detect, protect, and treat.”

Key points

EU/EEA/UK clinicians should consult all ECDC technical documents, including the most recent, [Discharge criteria for confirmed COVID-19 cases](#) :

Discharge mild cases, as appropriate, provided patients are under home care.

Consider 14-day postdischarge quarantine with regular follow-up and ensure home is equipped for patient isolation, household protection (face masks, distancing, separate meals, hand sanitation, restricted outdoor activities).

Significance of oral-fecal route of transmission remains undetermined; advise patients strictly to follow hygienic precautions to prevent household transmission.

Test asymptomatic patients before discharge if tests are available.

Among reported cases, >90% are in 4 countries, and significant epidemic declines are occurring in 2 (China, South Korea).

WHO states that “all countries can change the course of the pandemic” and prevent community clustering through detection, testing, treatment, isolation, contact tracing, and response mobilization.

WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 - 11 March 2020.

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