

The age, sex and symptoms of China's Coronavirus victims

Synopsis

The virus has already spread to other parts of China and elsewhere triggering memories of the SARS pandemic.

By Will Davies and Stephen Tan

Several people who've died from a new virus in **China** didn't display symptoms of fever, potentially complicating global efforts to check for infected travelers as they arrive at airports and other travel hubs.

Details released by China's **National Health Commission** show that as of Jan. 23, five of the 17 people who died after being infected with novel **coronavirus** displayed other symptoms such as breathing difficulty, chest tightness and coughing. The joint-oldest victim, an 89-year-old male, was suffering from drowsiness and incontinence, as well as a fever. He sought medical help on Jan. 5 and died on Jan. 18. He had pre-existing conditions, including hypertension.

The absence of fever in some cases indicates that temperature screening, the most common measure being used at transport links and airports to check travelers, may not identify some infected people.

"If this virus can be transmitted without causing fever, then it's easier for the infection to travel globally because it can simply stay under the radar for a while," said Ramanan Laxminarayan, director of the Center for Disease Dynamics, Economics & Policy in Washington, D.C.

At least nine victims had pre-existing conditions such as diabetes, coronary artery disease and Parkinson's disease, the National Health Commission said. Eight were aged 80 or over, two were in their seventies, five in their sixties and one in his fifties. The youngest was a 48-year-old woman with a pre-existing condition. Four of the victims were women and the rest were men.

China has banned travel from **Wuhan**, the epicenter of the virus, essentially putting the capital of central China's Hubei province -- with a population of 11 million people -- under lockdown. The virus has already spread to other parts of the country and elsewhere, including the U.S. and Hong Kong, triggering memories of the SARS pandemic in 2003 that killed nearly 800 people.