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**Event: Cluster of pneumonia of unknown aetiology in Wuhan City, China**

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**Notified by: TARGET, NIS**

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**PHE NIERP Level n/a**

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**Distribution:** PHE briefing note cascade; PHE microbiology cascade for onwards distribution to NHS; private healthcare providers; devolved administrations

**Background and Interpretation:**

On 31 December 2019, WHO was informed by the People's Republic of China of cases of pneumonia of unknown microbial aetiology associated with Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. Some but not all cases were associated with Wuhan South China Seafood City market, which sells meat, poultry and seafood. At the last report to WHO on 03 January 2020, there were 44 cases of which 11 were reported as severely ill. A Wuhan Municipal Health Commission update on 05 January reported 59 cases, including 7 critically ill patients, with no deaths. The first case became unwell on 12 December 2019 and the onset date of the last case was 29 December 2019. Current reports describe no evidence of significant human to human transmission, including no infections of healthcare workers. Cases of pneumonia possibly linked to Wuhan City have been assessed in Hong Kong.

Limited clinical information available suggests some cases have bilateral pulmonary infiltrates. Wuhan Health Commission report that influenza, adenovirus, SARS-CoV and MERS-CoV have been ruled out. Investigations for other pathogens continue. It is possible that this cluster represents the emergence of a novel pathogen.

Although the cluster in Wuhan City is not due to avian influenza, according to current reports, avian influenza has been reported in this region and it remains a possibility in returning travellers from Wuhan City.

This is an evolving situation and further updates will be provided.

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**Implications and recommendations for clinical microbiology, virology and infectious diseases services**

NHS microbiology/virology/ID services should communicate the information in this briefing note appropriately within their Trust, including with Emergency Departments and acute medical services. Patients who present with pneumonia and have travelled to China in the 14 days prior to onset of symptoms should have a detailed travel and exposure history taken.

**For all patients who have pneumonia with onset within 14 days after travel to Wuhan city:**

**If avian influenza risk factors are present, [follow usual PHE protocols for suspected avian influenza](#) and in addition contact the PHE Colindale duty doctor ( **I&S** ) to discuss additional testing. Notify the local Health Protection Team.**

**If avian influenza risk factors are not present:** The patient should be managed in respiratory isolation, using the local personal protective equipment protocol for airborne infections, incorporating a fit-tested FFP3 mask and eye protection. Cleaning of patient areas should also be undertaken in the same PPE. Local standard microbiology testing, including testing of upper and lower respiratory tract samples where feasible, should be undertaken in containment level 3. This should include at minimum testing for influenza and *Legionella pneumophila*. Reserve a portion of all samples where possible and contact the PHE



Colindale duty doctor **I&S** to arrange further testing. Notify the local Health Protection Team.

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#### **Implications and recommendations for PHE Centres**

Health Protection teams may be contacted about patients with pneumonia who have travelled to Wuhan City. They should advise the clinician to take a detailed travel and exposure history and to follow the recommendations above for clinical services. On receipt of calls, record dates of travel, details of the return flight to the UK, presence of any avian influenza risk factors and contact with human cases of severe respiratory illness. Records should be linked to the HPZone context '**Wuhan undiagnosed pneumonia**'.

#### **Implications and recommendations for PHE site and services**

Public health laboratories may receive requests to test samples from patients who have travelled to Wuhan City. Please contact the Colindale duty doctor (0208 200 4400) to arrange further testing.

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#### **References/ Sources of information**

WHO: Disease outbreak news <https://www.who.int/csr/don/05-january-2020-pneumonia-of-unkown-cause-china/en/>

Wuhan Municipal Health Commission (Chinese)  
<http://wjw.wuhan.gov.cn/front/web/showDetail/2020010509020>

PHE Avian influenza: guidance for managing human cases  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/avian-influenza-guidance-and-algorithms-for-managing-human-cases>

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