

What Should We Know About **CORONAVIRUS**

Although our health topic is mental health, I felt it important to recognize a health issue that's in the headlines and on the news almost daily – the coronavirus. Chinese first heard of this virus around January 1 of 2020 when it was reported that the police in Wuhan China had questioned and punished eight doctors for spreading “rumors” online about a SARS-like illness seen in patients at hospitals. At that time caution was not advised and citizens were reminded that rumors that “disturb social order” should not be spread. This cost China and the world time in the struggle to contain the virus. On February 9 the **Bloomberg Business News** stated that the death numbers from this virus reached at least 904 worldwide, including an American citizen diagnosed with the virus in Wuhan who died in a hospital there on February 6. Cases of the virus have been diagnosed in 28 countries, including Dane county in our state.

International events have been cancelled, cruise ships quarantined, and suspicion, blame, and panic have increased. On the positive, countries have stepped up to block the spread of the coronavirus. Health organizations have offered help in containing spread of the virus, getting needed supplies to China, and exploring its causes and treatments.

We don't know much about the cause or source of the outbreak. We do know the symptoms mimic symptoms of other respiratory viral infections – cough, fever, shortness of breath- which is spread from person to person mainly through respiratory droplets produced from the cough or sneezing of an infected person. Death usually results from worsening symptoms and lung complications. There is at present no vaccine for this virus.

What is the most effective treatment? The BEST prevention is to avoid close contact with others who are sick. WASH YOUR HANDS often with soap and water, and avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Stay home when you are sick. Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue and then throw the tissue away. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces or objects. Most people will recover from the coronavirus. Don't panic; take care of your health and the health of those around you.

(As a gentle reminder, these are the same precautions we should be taking to avoid other viruses such as the flu and even the common cold. US deaths due to the Influenza virus in 2017-2018 were estimated to be the highest in 40 years. We have a vaccine for influenza....but measures listed above are also part of our defense against illness)

Sherry Jelic – CHE Chair, Partners of WHA