In the era of fast and easily accessible information through the internet, the most difficult and important aspect of data is its reliability. Rumours are easy to spread and time to review the information is less. This dilutes the presence of facts to the extent that it becomes impossible to differentiate between the wheat and chaff.

In the same context, it is imperative to draw light upon the much in news Coronavirus. While most information on the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) is based on other coronaviruses that affect humans, scientists around the globe are constantly working on investigations and treatment for it.

The Source:

It was first identified in a group of live-stock workers in Wuhan, China. Coronaviruses were given their name based on crown-like projections on their surfaces. Corona in Latin means “halo or crown”. Different coronaviruses infect humans and animals with the greatest variety of coronaviruses seen in bats. There are 4 main human coronaviruses that account for 10-30% of common cold worldwide. COVID-19 has currently affected citizens of over 28 countries.

The Threat:
The virus causes respiratory illness like any other virus. The infection starts with fever and cough and might lead to breathing difficulty. In rare cases, mostly when the infected individual is already suffering from another medical issue like diabetes or cardiac disorder, the infection may be fatal.

The Transmission:

COVID-19 is a respiratory virus that spreads primarily through contact with an infected person through respiratory droplets generated when a person, for example, coughs or sneezes, or through droplets of saliva.

The animal source of the COVID-19 virus has not yet been identified. This does not mean you can catch it from any animal or from your pet.

The Symptoms:

The incubation period for the COVID-19 is assumed to be from 2 to 14 days, which means that after being exposed to the virus, it can take an individual about 48 hours to 14 days to show initial symptoms of an infection. As mentioned earlier, the signs of the respiratory illness caused by COVID-19 include fever, cough, and difficulty in breathing. The complications can further spiral into viral pneumonia in severe cases.

The Diagnosis:

If you have travelled to affected countries or are in contact with people who have travelled to such areas in the past fortnight, call your doctor or hospital for advice. Please visit a hospital or clinic after informing your travel or exposure history to ensure adequate precautions can be placed. The diagnosis can happen through a simple reverse transcriptase-polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test that detects the virus using respiratory secretions, i.e. nasal or oral swabs as specimens. It is currently done only in a few government-approved centres.

The Dos:

The patients/suspects must –

Stay in isolation until recovery as advised by your doctor
Strictly practice respiratory hygiene
Wash hands with soap and water at regular intervals

People in general must –

Avoid travel to affected countries
Avoid contact with infected patients
Cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing and sneezing and throw the tissue away immediately and wash hands.
Eat only well-cooked animal products
Wash hands with soap and water frequently

The virus is currently known to affect adults and older people more than children but with time this scenario may change. Epidemic outbreaks like these require enhanced mindfulness about what one is consuming and subjecting oneself to since prevention is always better than cure.