

The Government of Japan
Expert Meeting on the Novel Coronavirus Disease Control
"Views on the Novel Coronavirus Disease Control"
(Summary Version)

March 9, 2020

1. Japan's basic strategy for preventing the spread of infection

The three pillars of Japan's strategy are, "early detection of and early response to clusters," "early patient diagnosis and enhancement of intensive care and the securing of a medical service system for the severely ill," and "behavior modification of citizens."

This strategy is in line with the strategy recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO).

2. Current infection situation in Japan

Currently, the number of infectious cases is trending upward. However, overall, approximately 80% of the domestic confirmed carriers, regardless of the severity of their symptoms, did not infect others.

Additionally, there are cases where the creation of clusters have been found relatively quickly. This has led to the slowing down of the rate of increase in infectious cases compared to other countries where infectious cases are increasing rapidly.

In the expert meeting's views announced on February 24, we stated that "the next one-to-two weeks are a critical moment regarding whether the outbreak spreads rapidly or is controlled." However, based on the above circumstances, Japan's situation as of today is not moving toward an explosive spread of infections, and appears to be somewhat holding steady.

Yet, the number of infectious cases is expected to continue to grow for some time, with some temporary increases and decreases. Additionally, as mentioned below, since there is an approximately two-week time lag when ascertaining the status of the infection—which prevents us from getting a full picture of the infection status—we cannot let our guard down yet.

3. Patients who develop severe symptoms

In Japan, the number of deaths is not increasing significantly. This indicates that even with limited medical resources, doctors in Japan are able to detect patients who may develop severe symptoms and are providing proper care, indicating high quality of their medical service.

4. Measures taken in Hokkaido (*) to "reduce contact among people as much as possible"

In Hokkaido ¹, the governor declared a "state of emergency for the novel coronavirus" on February 28, 2020. More time is needed to obtain the initial data for examining the effects of the measure. This is because the incubation period for this infectious disease, from infection to onset, is five days on average, and the average time from onset to reporting is known to take approximately eight days on average, which means the data we are seeing today captures the situation of the newly infected from approximately two weeks prior. The analysis of the effects of this measure is scheduled to be announced around March 19.

5. Long-term outlook

Even if the domestic spread is contained at this moment, it is expected that for some time, a second wave can come at any time. Additionally, given the ongoing worldwide outbreak, infections entering from abroad are expected to continue to repeat.

It is anticipated that in areas where the rapid spread of infection is expected, we will be taking measures repeatedly for a long time to balance the continuation of socio-economic activities and outbreak prevention.

6. What we ask of you

The locations where mass infections were confirmed so far are places where the following three conditions were met simultaneously: (1) closed space with poor ventilation, (2) crowded with many people and (3) conversations and vocalization in close proximity (within arm's reach of one another). It is believed that more people were infected in such places. Therefore, we ask that you predict locations and settings where these three conditions could occur simultaneously and avoid them.

We do not have enough scientific evidence yet on how significantly such actions can reduce the risk of spreading infection. However, since places with poor ventilation and crowded places are increasing infections, we ask that you take precautions even before scientific evidence for clear standards is found.

We at the expert meeting ask that all citizens participate in this fight with the infectious disease.

*One of the areas in Japan where infection is spread the most at this point