# Malaysia's Surveillance Response to COVID-19: Could We Perform Better?

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The spread of COVID-19 rapidly brought unprecedented strains on health systems. The establishment of an effective and real-time surveillance system is critical to facilitate timely planning and outbreak management.

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**Objective** 

To identify areas for improvements in Malaysia's health surveillance system during outbreak.

## Results

#### Method

Using the COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan document<sup>1</sup>, an online survey consisting of open-ended questions were sent out to the public and identified key informants between late March and mid-April 2020. The responses were exported to NVIVO-12 software and using content analysis, issues related to Malaysia's health system response to COVID-19 were identified. Issues on surveillance were deductively grouped based on the surveillance domains identified (System Structure, Core Function, Surveillance Quality & Support Function) in World Health Organization document.<sup>2</sup>

primary implementation please countries response quarantine outbreak enforce needs community country proper ministries evaluation centres people testing information number social staff neal th healthcare using planning action **CASES** resources system national support ministry level little group COV1d places malaysia transparent improved coordination media guideline private communication essential especially government local limited control capacity example pandemic however already patients religious approach earlier different established workers infection coordinated 100 most commonly used words to describe surveillance

The survey captured responses from 16 key informants and 60 public respondents. We identified areas for improvement related to the four surveillance domains. Areas requiring immediate versus long-term attention were also highlighted. For example, mobilisation of healthcare personnel to highly affected districts to facilitate sampling process, contact tracing and data analysis required urgent action. Conversely, the development of competency in the surveillance processes needed continuous regular training over time.



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ensure confidentiality and ownership of data" (Expert)

Networking

Partnership

"Form teams consisting of various experts in the country to do analysis and publish data that have been collected" (Expert) Case detection

Data analysis

interpretation

"We are still old-fashioned whereby tracing was done manually by health personnel, when many other countries are already utilising technology to track, trace, enforce, predict etc..." (Public)

ctions The findings provide valuable insights for policymaker to prioritise immediate and long-term improvements to further strengthen Malaysia's surveillance system.

Well-defined case definition

**Clear Guidelines** 

Mobilisation of resources

Sharing of surveillance data

#### Immediate

### Long-term

**Policy improvement** 

**Competency development** 

Information technology infrastructure development

Strengthening monitoring & evaluation

### **Take Home Messages**

Health system issues for an outbreak need to be prioritised and addressed.

Learning from past experiences is imperative to strengthen our health system including surveillance activities to better manage future outbreaks.

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#### References

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