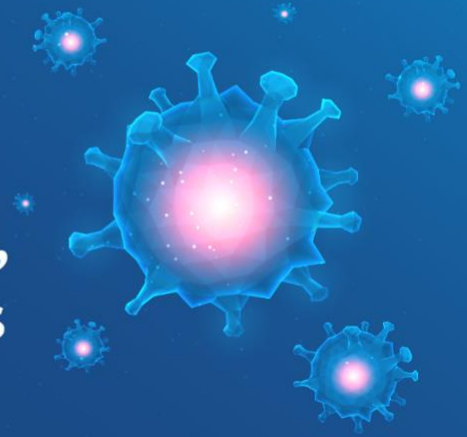


# COVID-19 Response Lessons from Asian Countries, including Digital Interventions



## **WEBINAR: Health System Response to COVID-19: Lessons from the Republic of Korea**

20 April 2020, 4:00–5:30 p.m. (UTC+8)

### **Presentation 1: Ten decisive scenes in the COVID-19 response**



Prof. Seung-sik Hwang

**Dr. Seung-sik Hwang** is a Professor of epidemiology from the School of Public Health, Seoul National University. He is a member of the Society on Epidemiology's consultation committee on COVID-19 response. He served during the 2015 MERS outbreak as the field epidemiologist for the committee on the MERS outbreak investigation. He is a medical doctor and holds a Ph.D. in epidemiology from Seoul National University. His main research interests include spatio-temporal epidemiology, with focus on public health preparedness and disaster response.

#### **Summary of Presentation**

*Presented by Sung-Il Cho and Kunhee Park on behalf of Seung-sik Hwang*

Two months after the first COVID-19 confirmed case, the Republic of Korea has been commended for its efforts to contain the outbreak. Although the response was not without flaws, their experience is distinct in several respects: (i) early and speedy response, (ii) transparency, and (iii) public-private partnership. This presentation examines ten decisive scenes, which examine the trajectory of the Republic of Korea's national response against the spread of COVID-19. The presentation will also discuss strategies for infection prevention and control that have been implemented within their borders.

## Presentation 2: Strategies to respond to COVID-19 in the Republic of Korea



Dr. Sung-Il Cho

Dr. Sung-Il Cho is a professor of epidemiology from the School of Public Health, Seoul National University. Cho is a member of Korea Center for Disease Control's consultation committee on COVID-19 response. He served from 2017-2018 as the Director of the Seoul Metropolitan Government's Support Center on Infectious Disease Control, and continues as a consultant to Seoul for COVID-19 response. He holds a Sc.D. in epidemiology from Harvard School of Public Health. His main research interests include infectious disease epidemiology and public health surveillance.

### Summary of Presentation

The approach taken by the Republic of Korea to the COVID-19 outbreak has been characterized as “trace, test, and treat” policy. Intensive contact tracing methods have been developed during the MERS outbreak in 2015. Contacts with a COVID-19 case are quarantined and tested for diagnosis. High availability of testing is essential for focused quarantine. Timely quarantine reduces the number of patients to treat, keeping the outbreak under control. In addition, asymptomatic transmission necessitates sufficient levels of social distancing. This is currently the greatest challenge, since the epidemic is expected to last long.

## Presentation 3: Republic of Korea's COVID-19 response from the district health authority perspective



Dr. Kunhee Park

**Dr. Kunhee Park** is the Director General of the Sangnoksu District Health Office in Ansan City. He had worked at WHO's Western Pacific Regional Office as an acting team coordinator, medical officer, and technical officer in the area of health systems, maternal and child health, and country support from 2009 to 2017. He is a medical doctor and holds a Ph.D. in public health (health policy and management) from Seoul National University.

## Summary of Presentation

In the Republic of Korea, the district health authority's responsibility in the overall COVID-19 response are: risk communication, health education, surveillance, coordination of testing, contact tracing, self-quarantine management, and local-level resource allocation. The district health authority's response follows the Republic of Korea's CDC's guidelines, which is now at its seventh edition since the beginning of the outbreak.

Public-private collaboration, central-local coordination, and citizen's participation are COVID-19-related governance issues at the district level.

## Presentation 4: Universal Health Coverage and key health policy lessons from COVID-19 response



Prof. Soonman Kwon

**Prof. Soonman Kwon** is a professor and former dean of the School of Public Health, Seoul National University. He has held visiting positions at the Harvard School of Public Health, London School of Economics, University of Toronto, Peking University, and the University of Bremen. He was the Chief of the Health Sector Group at the Asian Development Bank and is the founding director of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Health System and Financing. He is currently the president of the Republic of Korea's Health Economic Association and has served as president of the Association of Schools of Public Health and the Korean Gerontological Society. He holds a Ph.D. in health economics from the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania.

## Summary of Presentation

This presentation examines key policy lessons from the Republic of Korea's experience on the COVID-19 response, which it hopes to share to LMICs.

Governance plays a key role in the health policy response to a pandemic, including trust, transparency and communication. Health financing and universal health coverage improves access to treatment for patients. Purchasing mechanisms, covering both public and private providers, enhance the capacity of the health system to respond to the surge of patients during an outbreak. Major challenges remain regarding the protection of the vulnerable population such as poor, older people as well as privacy concerns.