

Facing Global COVID-19: Taiwan Experience

by Lian-Hua Huang
ICN Board Member
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Taiwan was expected to have the second highest number of cases of COVID-19 due to its proximity to where the epidemic originated. Until March 9, 2020, Taiwan has 45 confirmed cases, ranked the 29th worldwide. Since SARS in 2003, Taiwan has been on constant highly alert and ready to act on epidemics.

The key strategies in facing global COVID-19 can be summarized as follows:

1. **Central Command System.** Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC) is responsible for case identification, containment, and resources reallocation, including ministries of health and welfare, transportation, education, economics, labor and culture etc. The toll-free number 1922 serves as a hotline for citizens.
2. **Effective communication of transparent information and policy.** The CECC holds a daily press conference to release the most updated information and policy transparently. All television channels are being used to educate the public for the appropriate personal protection action required at different occasions, such as where and when wearing face mask, hand washing, avoiding big gathering activities or crowded places, limiting hospital visit times etc. At early stage of the outbreak, the clear SOP and policies were quickly established for home quarantine, home isolation, and self-health management. All the SOP and policies have been executed strictly to prevent the nosocomial infection and community spreading. Effective communication and transparent information raise people's consciousness and prevent panic.
3. **Comprehensive Health Delivery System.** National Health Insurance was inaugurated in 1995, providing Universal Health Coverage with a coverage rate of 99.9% and accessible health services to all in Taiwan. After SARS in 2003, Taiwan established Communicable Disease Control Medical Network (CDCMN) which has six sub-regions, 134 isolation hospitals and 1,100 negative-pressure isolation rooms, to provide appropriate and adequate care for patients with communicable diseases.
4. **Building rapid investigation team.** A medical team composed of epidemiologists and infection control physicians and nurses, work together to carry out boarding quarantine, testing, and case investigation for the confirmed patients to trace the original cases and potential contact persons to prevent further spread. The testing criteria of COVID-19 were clearly set up and tests are free for the public.
5. **Proactive maneuver.** On January 20th, at early stage of COVID-19 global outbreak, the Taiwan Centers for Disease Control (CDC) officially activated the Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC). Based on travel history to identify

people who are at risk. Taiwan also used new technology to classify people's travel history in the past 14 days, including QR code scanning and online reporting, and clinical symptoms to aid case identification. Almost every public building offers hand sanitizer and temperature check as a routine.

6. **Resources allocation.** As early as January 24th, resources allocation was controlled and monitored by the central government including prohibiting export of masks, setting the price of masks, using government funds and military personnel to increase mask production. In the meantime, adopting real-name system to ensure enough masks for frontline care providers, and to avoid hoarding by lay people. The government proactively deployed 3 million N95 masks and 3 million isolation gowns to ensure the need of frontline medical personnel.
7. **Supporting system for nurses.** Nurses in Taiwan play a vital role in health care delivery, both in the hospital and community. TWNA and TUNA, the two biggest nursing associations, speak for nurses to ensure enough personal protective equipment and equal special subsidies. Special subsidies have been approved by the government for the involved physicians and nurses with USD\$300/day in early March. The government and hospitals also established support system for the nurses who take care of the infected patients and are in quarantine.

In short, in Taiwan, the quick response and high vigilance of Central Epidemic Command Center and the cross-departmental collaboration are the keys to successfully contain the COVID-19. The government, healthcare system, and the public still pay close attention to combat the COVID-19.