

How to contain the infodemic

: Lesson from 2015 MERS-CoV & Covid-19

Session 2: How can the infodemic managed, described and measured?

WHO ad-hoc technical consultation on managing the Covid-19 infodemic
Day 1, Tuesday, 7 June, 2020

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Recap: 2015 MERS-CoV

- The index case from a middle east country confirmed on May 20
- 186 confirmed cases over the past five months
- 38 deaths (Case Fatality Rate: 20%)
- No community infection in ROK
- The biggest MERS outbreak outside middle east

- Those numbers are not that big compared to number related to Covid-19 outbreak in ROK
- Nevertheless, it changed quite a lot in a healthcare system and gave us a chance to prepare for another PHE
- Infodemic management could be one part prepared in advance



2015 photo: true? Or a performance?

Economic Loss in June, 2015 in Seoul/Korea (compared to the previous month)

Revenue Loss
of Medical Facilities
(Korea)



20%



Customers of
Shopping Mall
(Seoul)



18%



Tourists
from Overseas
(Korea)



38%



Passengers
using public
transportation
(Seoul)



12%

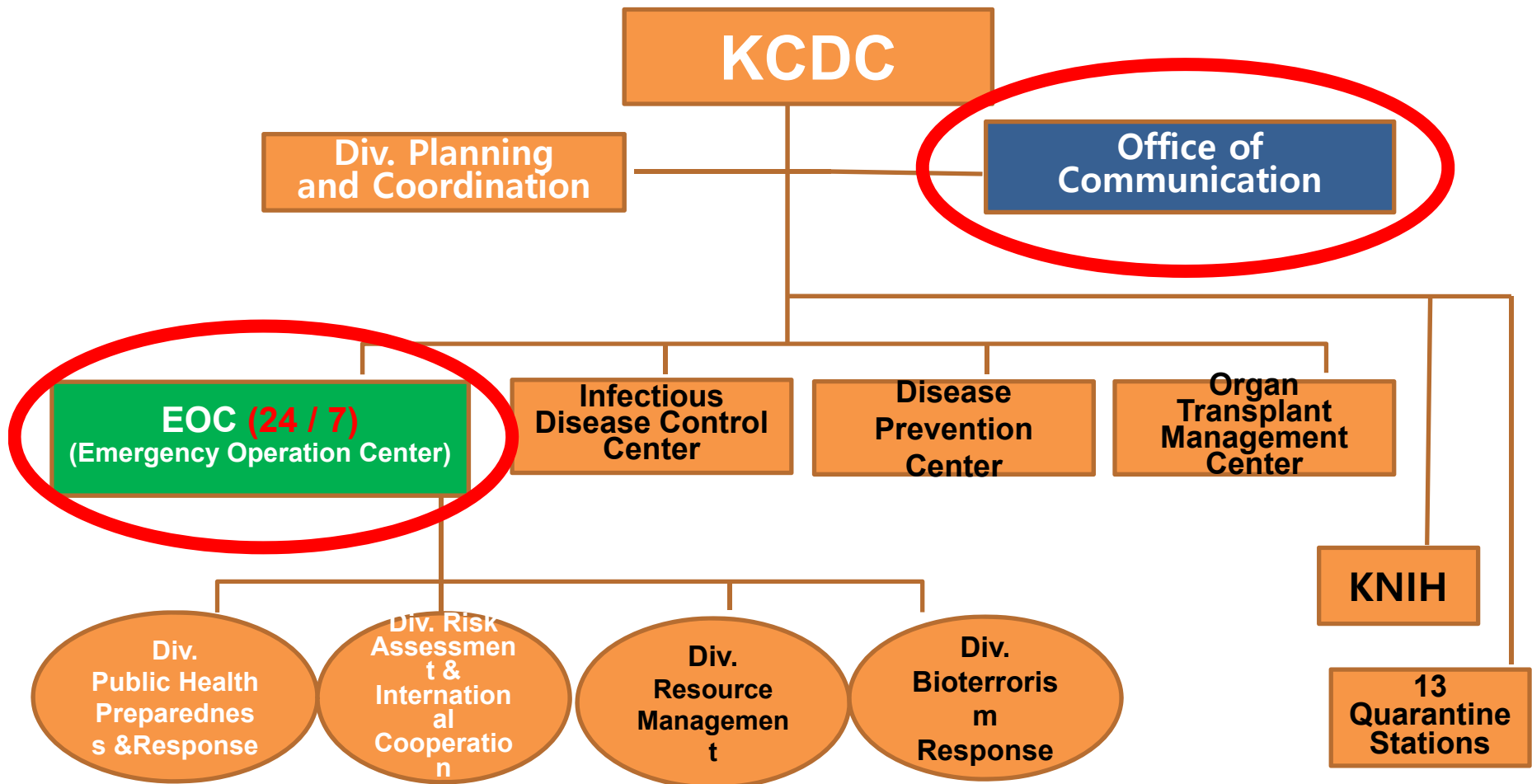


<Source : 2017 MERS white paper of Seoul Metropolitan City>

Economic loss: Korea stock index plunged in 2020.. Still in unrest



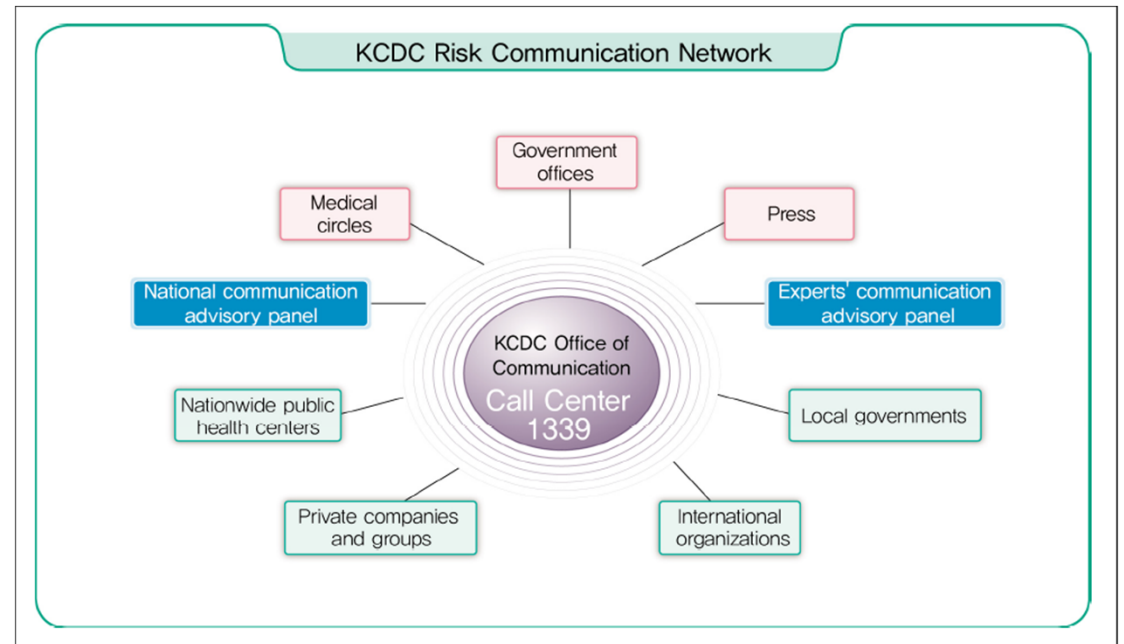
Changes after MERS since 2016



Risk Communication Guideline for Public Health Emergencies

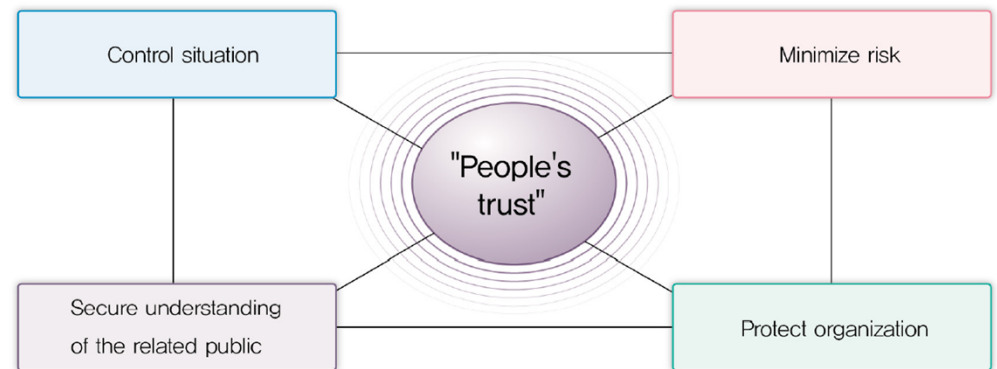


Korea Centers for Disease Control & Prevention



1.3. Objectives of Risk Communication for Public Health Emergencies

To respond to risk appropriately so as to prevent or minimize negative outcomes, and thus to protect the public, stakeholders and the organization from damages of the risk,



How we can we define the infodemic

after 2015 MERS-CoV and during Covid-19

- is easy to spread like EIDs since there is no specific treatments and vaccine – which is unknown to the public and experts
- sounds very plausible and easy to understand
- contains a little portion of fact which makes people regard it as true
- spreads/amplifies way faster than the virus in this connected world
- moves faster than responders: disinformation can just pop up while it takes while for defenders to response with scientific evidence
- Is more dangerous to the people with health illiteracy or psychologically challenged in a crisis ⁷



성남 '은혜의 강' 교회 교회 [사진 경기도]

Spraying salty water into mouth in a church, ROK. More than 64 were confirmed in the church

Truth: Gargling with salt water could be a home remedy for a sore throat, but it has not been proven to prevent or kill the virus



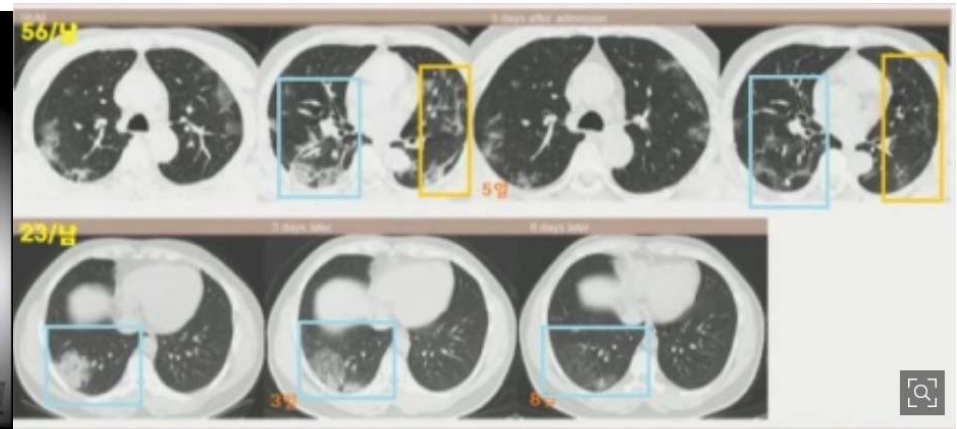
Drinking Garlic Juice ...

Rumor: "Garlic/boiled garlic water can help prevent corona infection"

Truth: Garlic is a health food (antimicrobial properties), but no evidence of protecting people from the virus



Spraying deadly alcohol (toxic methanol) at home for disinfection and family members were hospitalized



코로나19 중국 사례 2건. 56세 남성(위쪽)은 입원 당시 양쪽 폐에 하얗게 폐렴 소견이 심했지만, 5일 뒤 흰색이 줄어들고 열어졌다. 23세 남성(아래)도 입원 당시보다 3일, 8일째에 CT에서 하얗게 보이는 염증 소견이 빠르게 줄어들었다. [자료 서울아산병원 도경현 교수]

Rumor: "People who recover from covid-19 will get permanent lung damage."

Experts said that mostly not but might be true in few extreme cases like other lung-related diseases.

How ROK are responding to infodemics

- **Ministry of Health & KCDC**
 - Daily briefing and Q&A twice a day
 - Information dissemination via Online-network
 - Fact-checking news by State-run TV(KTV) during weekdays
- **Korea Communications Commission**
 - Check on online portals including clickbait sites
- **Police Department**
 - Investigate those who post up disinformation on their social media
- **Traditional Media**
 - Fact-checking program/section
- **Doctor's Association**
 - Recommendation and advice on misleading or false medical news
 - Fact-checking: Is it airborne? Salt water kill the virus? Wear a N95 mask?
- **Major search engines** (naver & daum)
 - Monitoring misinformation and cooperate with KCC
- **Telecom Companies**
 - Cut off spam text messages containing disinformation and rumors

How to deal with the infodemic : From **Ro(basic reproduction rate)** perspective

- Ro of the virus is determined mostly by
 - ① Probability of transmission per contact
 - ② Average number of contacts per time unit
 - ③ Duration of infectiousness

- I presume Ro of the infodemic could be affected by
 - ① Audience's vulnerability related to their health literacy, belief, knowledge
 - ② Disseminators(social media or websites) traffic volume
 - ③ Plausibility of the misinformation and speed of health authorities' response with science evidence

In this respect, I suggest we have to address the infodemic in a more systematic, science-based, quantitative way

• Thank you~

If you have any questions,

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