

Georgia Southern University

Digital Commons@Georgia Southern

---

Public Health, Jiann-Ping Hsu College of - News

Public Health Publications

---

4-17-2020

## College of Public Health News

Georgia Southern University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/coph-news-online>



Part of the [Public Health Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

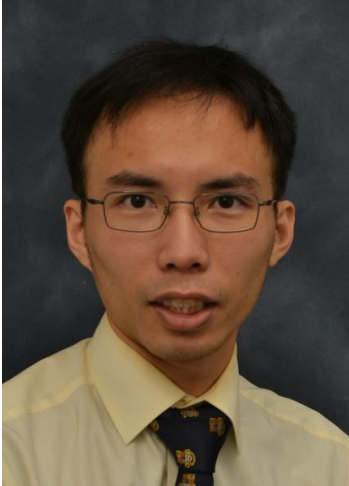
Georgia Southern University, "College of Public Health News" (2020). *Public Health, Jiann-Ping Hsu College of - News*. 248.

<https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/coph-news-online/248>

This article is brought to you for free and open access by the Public Health Publications at Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. It has been accepted for inclusion in Public Health, Jiann-Ping Hsu College of - News by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu).

# Limited early warnings and public attention to COVID-19 in China, January-February, 2020: a longitudinal cohort of randomly sampled Weibo users

April 17, 2020



## **Abstract**

by Yuner Zhu, King-Wa Fu, Karen A. Grépin, Hai Liang, and Isaac Chun-Hai Fung.

## **Background:**

Awareness and attentiveness have implications for the acceptance and adoption of disease prevention and control measures. Social media posts provide a record of the public's attention to an outbreak. To measure the attention of Chinese netizens to COVID-19, a pre-established nationally representative cohort of Weibo users was searched for COVID-19-related keywords in their posts.

## **Methods:**

COVID-19-related posts (N=1101) were retrieved from a longitudinal cohort of 52,268 randomly sampled Weibo accounts (December 31, 2019 – February 12, 2020).

## **Results:**

Attention to COVID-19 was limited prior to China openly acknowledging human-to-human transmission on January 20. Following this date, attention quickly increased and has remained high over time. Particularly high levels of social media traffic appeared around when Wuhan was first placed in quarantine (January 23-24, 8-9% of the overall posts), when a scandal associated with the Red Cross Society of China occurred (February 1, 8%), and following the death of Dr. Li Wenliang (February 6-7, 11%), one of the whistleblowers reprimanded by the Chinese police in early January for discussing this outbreak online.

## **Discussion:**

Limited early warnings represent missed opportunities to engage citizens earlier in the outbreak. Governments should more proactively communicate early warnings to the public in a transparent manner.

[Click for Link to Article](#)

Posted in [None](#)