13.A. Workshop: Responding to COVID19 in Europe: a tale of five countries

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Since emerging from a market in Wuhan China in December 2019, SARS-CoV-2, the pathogen causing COVID-19, has spread worldwide. On January 30th 2020 the World Health Organization declared the COVID19 outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, and declared it a pandemic on March 11th 2020. With over 2.4 million cases and 180,000 deaths reported by mid-June, Europe has been the second most affected region in the world. Individual countries such as Italy and the UK have been amongst the hardest hit in the world. However, the COVID19 situation in Europe is marked by wide variations both in terms of how countries have been affected, and in terms of how they have responded.

The proposed workshop will provide compare and contrast the situation and response in five countries in the European region: The UK, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Sweden, moderated by a firm and charismatic chair. This interactive workshop will enable better understanding of the disease’s spread and trajectory in different EU countries. International comparisons will help to describe the growth and scale of the pandemic in the selected EU countries. The choice of countries reflects those that have reported high and low incidence and mortality, as well as represent a range in the stringency of the control measures implemented, from full lockdown to the most permissive. The session will go beyond describing those and will be an opportunity to discuss the pros and cons of these different approaches and lessons learnt around the different components of the response such as case identification, contact tracing, testing, social distancing, mask use, health communication and inequalities. We plan to have short and effective 5 min presentations followed by a longer and constructively provocative moderated discussion.

Importantly, the five European case studies will offer ground to discuss the public health principles behind outbreak management preparedness and balancing public health with other imperatives such as economic ones, but also social frustration. The audience will be engaged through a Q&A session.

Key messages:
- The approach to managing the COVID19 outbreak has varied among European countries, and the optimal approach is likely to be context specific.
- The effect of the pandemic will be long term and public health imperatives must take population attitudes and behavior as well as economic and indirect health effects into account.