SARS-CoV-2 spread to Iran

Date: 20 February 2020

The Iranian authorities reported two deaths in elderly men without a travel history due to SARS-CoV-2 in the city of Qom and one death in Arak.
An unofficial source mentions 9 deaths in the holy city of Qom, with 1 doctor and two nurses in ICU. Iran suspended flights between Tehran and China just a few days ago.

EITaF comment
With an estimated mortality of around 2%, 9 deaths indicate a cluster of about 500 cases. The holy city of Qom is an important place to visit for Shia Muslims from all over the world, and as such it is always crowded. Arak is an industrial city north of Tehran with many Chinese workers. Qom is two hours drive from Tehran and Arak 1 hour drive.

If this is confirmed this will be the largest community cluster of SARS-CoV-2 outside China.

The news could have implications for travel advice to Iran.

Eskild Petersen and Nicola Petrosillo
Co-chairs
ESCMID Emerging Infections Task force