Infographic: Where does the coronavirus fit in humanity's long history of plagues and influenza pandemics?

Disease and illnesses have plagued humanity since the earliest days, our mortal flaw. However, it was not until the marked shift to agrarian communities that the scale and spread of these diseases increased dramatically.

Widespread trade created new opportunities for human and animal interactions that sped up such epidemics. Malaria, tuberculosis, leprosy, influenza, smallpox, and others first appeared during these early years.

The more civilized humans became – with larger cities, more exotic trade routes, and increased contact with different populations of people, animals, and ecosystems – the more likely pandemics would occur.

Despite the persistence of disease and pandemics throughout history, there's one consistent trend over time – a gradual reduction in the death rate. Healthcare improvements and understanding the factors that incubate pandemics have been powerful tools.

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The [practice of quarantine](#) began during the 14th century, in an effort to protect coastal cities from plague epidemics. Cautious port authorities required ships arriving in Venice from infected ports to sit at anchor for 40 days before landing — the origin of the word quarantine from the Italian "quaranta giorni", or 40 days.

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It's hard to calculate and forecast the true impact of [COVID-19](#), as the outbreak is still ongoing and researchers are still learning about this new form of coronavirus.

[deadliest pandemics infographic](#)

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