

## China's latest outbreak sparks concerns over dangerous coronavirus mutations

Chinese doctors are seeing the coronavirus manifest differently among patients in its new cluster of cases in the northeast region compared to the original outbreak in Wuhan, suggesting that the pathogen may be changing in unknown ways and complicating efforts to stamp it out.

Patients found in the northern provinces of Jilin and Heilongjiang appear to carry the virus for a longer period of time and take longer to test negative, Qiu Haibo, one of China's top critical care doctors, told state television on [May 19].

Patients in the northeast also appear to be taking longer than the one to two weeks observed in Wuhan to develop symptoms after infection, and this delayed onset is making it harder for authorities to catch cases before they spread, said Qiu, who is now in the northern region treating patients.

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Researchers worldwide are trying to ascertain if the virus is mutating in a significant way to become more contagious as it races through the human population, but early [research](#) suggesting this possibility has been criticized for being overblown.

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It's likely that the observations in China don't have a simple correlation with a mutation and "very clear evidence" is needed before concluding that the virus is mutating, [professor Keiji Fukuda] said.

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