

Medical heroes step up to serve their country

Doctors and nurses from across Shanxi volunteering to help fight infections in Hubei province

By YUAN SHENGGAO

On Jan 23, a day before Lunar New Year's Eve, Liu Ping, a doctor in Shanxi province, went to bed at 10 pm. After a day in the operating theater, she felt tired. She didn't know her husband, Wang Junping, also a local doctor, had made a big decision.

Wang, 58, told Shanxi Provincial People's Hospital where he works, that he wanted to join the local medical assistance team to help prevent and control the ongoing novel coronavirus outbreak in Hubei province.

As head of the gastroenterology department, Wang was not on the list. But he insisted, saying: "Let me go. I am old. It's a waste not to share my decades of experience."

Wang had headed the Shanxi emergency medical rescue team to help in the outbreak of SARS in 2003 and the H7N9 bird flu, which was discovered in 2013. In 2010, he provided treatment at 2,000 meters underground, where about 150 miners were trapped in an accident.

In the early morning of Jan 24, Liu saw a suitcase at the door. She knew this day would come, but didn't expect it would be so soon. She decided to make him dumplings.

"I didn't get any firsthand information, but I think the outbreak is, in many aspects, similar to SARS," said Wang at the family reunion dinner later that day. For most of the evening, Wang talked about the epidemic. "Self-protection is most important. My experience is to wear a face mask whenever you visit a patient."

By that time, Wang's hospital had received a lot of patients and he was in the expert group. Both his daughter and son-in-law are doctors.

On Jan 29, following two days of training, Wang put on protective garments and walked into the suspected infection ward of Xiantao Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Xiantao city, Hubei province.

Liu's daughter asked whether she would go to Hubei as well, to which Liu said she had already applied and will go if needed.

In January, when the novel coronavirus outbreak gained prominence in Hubei, a massive number of patients, confirmed and suspect-



Two doctors from Shanxi give treatment to a patient in Xiantao city in Hubei province. YUAN ZHAOHUI / FOR CHINA DAILY



From left: Medical staff from Shanxi arrive in Xiantao on Jan 28. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY The first patient (center) in Shanxi province is released from Taiyuan No 4 People's Hospital on Jan 29 after he was cured of the novel coronavirus. MA LIMING / FOR CHINA DAILY



ed with the virus, streamed into hospitals. This caused a shortage of medical staff and supplies.

Shanxi province, in accordance with the arrangement of the central government, called on local medical workers to join a medical assistance

team to Hubei. Several hours after the Health Commission of Shanxi province released the initiative, applications flooded in from different cities.

On Jan 26, the first batch of 137 doctors and nurses from 35 local hospitals set off to Wuhan, capital of Hubei.

Together they vowed to "use their lives to guard lives in Hubei" at the airport in Taiyuan, Shanxi's capital city.

Hao Haihu, one of the team members, from Shanxi Bethune Hospital, studied for three years at the Tongji Medical College of Huazhong Uni-

versity of Science and Technology in Wuhan. He signed up once he read the news. "I feel honored to be selected for the team. I hope to ease pain for more patients."

His colleague, Zhang Lixin who is also in the team, said her parents

and two children didn't know where she would go and what she would do on the "business trip". "I told my eldest child: 'Mommy is going to fight the virus. I will return after we defeat it.'"

The team was divided into two; one to treat virus-infected patients in critical condition, one to treat ordinary patients. They headed for Xiantao, Tianmen and Qianjiang after arriving in Wuhan at midnight.

Zhang Luyan, a respiratory doctor from the People's Hospital of Yuci District and 41 other medical staff members were sent to Qianjiang.

She wrote in a WeChat message: "People often don't want their loved ones to take a risk. But this is a mission given by our country. Thank you for your concern. I feel inspired when seeing Hubei people warmly welcome us with applause."

Zhang's father, a retired teacher, said he supported her daughter's decision. "It's a good time to pay back the country and the people."

When the medical sub-team arrived in Xiantao, they found flowers at the building where they would be living. They were given by a nearby flower store to show thanks.

Pan Hongwei, general manager of Wushang Xiantao Shopping Center, said: "Their spirit of sacrifice despite the danger is very moving."

The mall sent to them 57 down jackets, 20 boxes of instant noodles, 20 boxes of water and 10 boxes of milk, all donated by merchants.

On Jan 30, four veterans in Qianjiang rode bikes to deliver two boxes of face masks and a box of protective clothing to the team from Shanxi. The city has banned private cars to prevent and control the outbreak.

When the city of Wuhan announced a lockdown on Jan 23, it was followed by most of the other cities in Hubei. The operation of airlines, trains, buses and subways in the city all closed. And the number of confirmed cases has risen.

Despite this, doctors and nurses from Shanxi, as well as other places in China, have chosen to fight in the epicenter, making their contributions to local disease prevention and control.

A second batch of 119 doctors and nurses from Shanxi reached Wuhan on Feb 2. The third team is in place and ready to go if needed, according to the local government.

Li Yu and Wang Jixia contributed to the story.

Equipment suppliers providing assistance

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Producers of medical supplies in North China's Shanxi province are stepping up efforts to manufacture urgently demanded equipment in Central China's Hubei province, which is being severely hit by the outbreak of the contagious novel coronavirus.

It's a routine for companies to halt business during the Spring Festival holiday, which was celebrated in late January this year, as employees are normally off work to reunite with their families.

This year, the Spring Festival routine was broken as the deadly infection spread in Wuhan, capital of Hubei province, and then spread to the entire country.

Short supply of items such as masks, protective clothing, goggles and disposable gloves has begun to make headlines in the media.

To deal with the situation, medical supplies companies in Shanxi, as well as their counterparts throughout the country, rapidly responded to demand.

Among such companies is White Pigeon, a labor-protective clothing producer based in Taiyuan, capital of Shanxi province.

Qin Min, chairwoman of the company, told the media that "we have been working three shifts a day to produce masks since Jan 29."

The company received a mandate to resume production from the local government on Jan 28. Employees returned to work the next day, Qin said.

"We are glad most of our employees are from Taiyuan and its neigh-



A fleet of trucks carrying medical supplies leaves Taiyuan for Hubei province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



boring areas, so we could reach a high-production capacity very quickly," Qin said.

Responding even quicker to the emergency was Xinhua Chemicals, based in Taiyuan.

The company began producing medical supplies on Jan 23 and delivered more than 30,000 masks in one week, according to its executives.

On Jan 28, the company donated 3 million yuan (\$427,800) worth of medical supplies to Wuhan, including 1,000 sets of air purifiers and 1,000 gas masks.

Most of the items have been delivered by the Taiyuan branch of China Post Group, a State-owned company for postal services, delivery, logistics and finance.

The China Post Taiyuan branch's fleet arrived in Wuhan and Huanggang — two Hubei cities severely hit by the virus — on Jan 31.

In Gaoping, another city in Shanxi province, its mayor Yuan Jian had a meeting with executives of the local Danyang Rubber Plastics on Jan 28, asking them to start

production of surgical masks immediately.

Danyang owns an assembly line for surgery masks, which has yet to be put into production.

In the face of emergency, the company completed workers training, equipment testing and purchased raw materials in just two days. The first batch of masks rolled off the line on Jan 30.

"This was a race against time and we succeeded," Yuan said.

According to the mayor, the city now has two production lines for masks, with a combined output of 100,000 a day.

In another development, a lorry carrying 30 metric tons of disinfectant departed Biomono Biotech in Yuncheng, Shanxi province.

The disinfectant, worth about 1.8 million yuan, will be donated to Huanggang city for disease control.

"We spent five days producing this batch of products using the full capacity of our plant," said Wang Yan, chief technical officer of the company.

"We are grateful to our employees for their devotion and to the local government for their coordination," Wang said, adding that the company is keen to make further contribution to the country's fight against the virus.

Li Yali contributed to the story.

Foreign affairs office advises expats to stay inside and keep hands clean

By YUAN SHENGGAO

To cope with the outbreak of pneumonia caused by the novel coronavirus, the Shanxi Foreign Affairs Office recently sent a message to foreign citizens living and traveling in the province.

Foreigners are advised to reduce or avoid outdoor activities, stay away from crowds, and cancel parties, group dinners and other group activities. They are suggested to keep a distance of more than 1 meter when talking with others.

"After returning home, immediately wash your hands with hand sanitizer and running water, or use hand disinfectant containing alcohol. When you come back from the hospital, take a shower and change your clothes first," the message said.

They are required to wear masks when going out and properly dispose of the used masks, avoid unprotected contact with wild animals, consume thoroughly cooked food and drink hot water.

Foreigners are also advised to measure their body temperatures on a regular basis. When such symptoms as fever, cough, breathing difficulty or general weakness occur, foreigners should wear masks and seek medical care right away at designated hospitals.

To better prevent and control the outbreak while protecting the



A health department worker disinfects a bus in Taiyuan, Shanxi province. SUN RONGXIANG AND ZHANG JIONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

“After returning home, immediately wash your hands with hand sanitizer and running water, or use hand disinfectant containing alcohol.”

Shanxi Foreign Affairs Office

health of themselves and their families, foreigners are reminded to pay close attention to the relevant information and preventive

measures released by the authorities of the central government and the Shanxi provincial government.

Foreigners can follow the WeChat account of the Shanxi Health Commission by searching "jksxgw" and the official website "http://wjw.shanxi.gov.cn" to obtain the latest updates on the virus, information of designated hospitals for patients with the novel coronavirus, preventive measures and important notices.

A 24-hour English service line in the Shanxi Provincial Foreign Affairs Office — 0351-4048572 — is available. Foreigners can also contact the Health Commission of Shanxi Province through 0351-3580527 or 0351-3076127.

Additional emergency service hotlines for foreigners in Shanxi province

Taiyuan: 0351-5625133, 0351-5625135
Datong: 0352-5193114, 0352-5193116, 0352-7933827
Yangquan: 0353-2295857, 0353-2295899
Changzhi: 0355-2022501,

0355-2022501
Jincheng: 0356-2066565, 0356-2024065
Shuozhou: 0349-5990166, 0349-4066011
Jinzhong: 0354-2636606, 0354-2638290

Yuncheng: 0359-2660027, 0359-2660121
Xinzhou: 0350-3301599, 0350-3301611
Linfen: 0357-2091131, 0357-2091314
Lyuliang: 0358-8222576, 0358-8222527