COVID-19: The coronavirus lessons the UK government chose to ignore

Timeline of events with early warnings relevant to UK health and safety planning

1937
Coronaviruses identified in animals

1960s
Coronaviruses identified in humans

2005
International Health Regulations (2005) bound every country to prioritize & dedicate domestic resources & recurrent spending for pandemic preparedness

2009
WHO/ILO Health Wise Action Manual: Work Improvement in Health Services

2011-16
WHO, Ebola outbreak

2014
H1N1 influenza pandemic
Pandemic flu planning reports for PPE in main US medical journal
UK swine flu outbreak killed hundreds of people

2015
Challenges of obtaining PPE in a pandemic flagged in US by major research group

2014–16
UK flu preparation plans tested and found wanting

2017
UK Government rejected advice to give PPE to all frontline NHS staff in a flu epidemic

2018
WHO Occupational Safety and Health in public health emergencies: guide WHO Managing Epidemics: key facts on major deadly diseases. OHS, PPE covered

2019
10/2019. Global Preparedness Monitoring Board flagged global lack of preparedness for emergencies including respiratory pandemics
17/11/2019. First human case of COVID in China reported in December 2019

2020
January 2020. First COVID case reported in UK
11 January
First COVID death reported in China
2 February
First COVID death outside China reported in Philippines
9 February
First COVID case contracted and reported in UK
10 February
British Medical Journal (BMJ) reports lack of access to PPE and staff testing for NHS staff
13 February
First COVID case outside China in Thailand reported
15 February
First COVID death in France from a different place of infection
16 February
18 February
WHO. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) technical guidance: Infection prevention and control
19 March
WHO. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak: rights, roles and responsibilities of health workers
21 March
Multiple reports of NHS staff protection ‘short of WHO guidelines’ and lacking Hand hygiene & hand sanitiser access and uses in Scottish hospitals – OHS issues
25 March
Health staff continue to report PPE supply problems
28 March
Continued shortage of PPE for social care staff
Scottish police report federation members providing their own hand sanitisers
Italian doctors’ association reports the death of 50 doctors from COVID
First UK surgeon reported to have died from COVID contracted in UK hospital
UK’s first ‘front line’ doctor died after contracting COVID

21 February
First Italian COVID outbreak occurs
First 3 COVID cases detected in France and reported in France
UK GPs unable to get hold of Covid-19 PPE and BMA calls for action

15 February
First COVID death in France from a different place of infection

13 February
WHO announces that the new coronavirus disease will be called “COVID-19”
Reports of UK rushing to secure COVID-19 PPE for nurses

11 February
WHO flags shortage of PPE for health workers endangering healthcare workers

10 February
British Medical Journal (BMJ) reports lack of access to PPE and staff testing for NHS staff

9 February
First COVID case contracted and reported in UK

2 February
First COVID death outside China reported in Philippines

30 January
WHO declares a global public-health emergency over COVID

25 February
WHO. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak: short of WHO guidelines’ and lacking Hand hygiene & hand sanitiser access and uses in Scottish hospitals – OHS issues

24 February
WHO. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) technical guidance: Infection prevention and control

Source cited in paper plus Eurosurveillance 2020 report, Businessinsider.com