

Amid China virus fears, even a haircut is a major operation

BEIJING (AP)—Need a trim in Beijing? You might have to wait.

Even getting a haircut has become a challenge in China now that most barbershops are temporarily shut to avoid public gatherings amid the virus outbreak.

Customers must maintain a distance of no less than five feet between chairs — that is, if they manage to make an appointment. Barbershops have to call customers who made reservations on the day of their appointment to ask if they have a cough or a fever, symptoms of pneumonia caused by the virus that causes COVID-19, according to information on the website of the Beijing Hairdressing and Beauty Association.

“Now we try to wash hair faster and cancel unnecessary services so as to cut down on the time with customers. We keep the door open every day. Once the customers who made reservations arrive, we will disinfect their hands and shoe soles,” said Fu Jun, founder of JF Pro Salon. “These are the measures we take to ensure safety.”

Just 130 Beijing barbershops were allowed to open by Monday, February 24,



HAIRCUTS ON HOLD. A barber wearing a protective face mask cuts the hair of a client with an eye cover and face mask at a hair salon in Beijing, on Monday, February 24, 2020. It was the second day of the second month of the Chinese lunar calendar, traditionally an auspicious time when people rush into barbershops to get new haircuts. Getting a fresh look on the day is thought to bring good luck for the year ahead, but getting a haircut has become a challenge in China with many barbershops temporarily shut to avoid public gatherings amid the coronavirus outbreak. (AP Photo/Olivia Zhang)

day is thought to bring good luck for the year ahead.

In past years, more than 200 customers would flock to each of his shops on this special day, Fu said. But today only about 100 customers made reservations for the four open shops.

Fu said his business can basically make ends meet but things must be much harder for other barbershops.

One of JF Pro Salon's customers was designer Ge Songyue, a regular of another of Fu's shops who came from the other side of the city to get his hair cut on the auspicious day.

“I think we should trust each other and let life get back to normal. If we need to have our hair cut, let's just do it,” Ge said.

only a tiny fraction of the more than 20,000 that usually operate across Beijing, Fu said.

Of JF Pro Salon's eight Beijing shops, four have been allowed to open since February 16.

Fu said 40% of its employees are back to work. Others are in self-quarantine, required by the government of all who

have returned from out of town. And some are unable to return at all because of the suspension of transport services from many places.

February 24 was the second day of the second month of the Chinese lunar calendar, traditionally an auspicious time when people rush into barbershops to get new haircuts. Getting a fresh look on the

IOC member casts doubt on postponing or moving Tokyo Games

By Stephen Wade
AP Sports Writer

TOKYO — A senior member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) says if it proves too dangerous to hold the Olympics in Tokyo this summer because of the coronavirus outbreak, organizers are more likely to cancel it altogether than to postpone or move it.

Dick Pound, a former Canadian swimming champion who has been on the

IOC since 1978, making him its longest-serving member, estimated there is a three-month window — perhaps a two-month one — to decide the fate of the Tokyo Olympics, meaning a decision could be put off until late May.

“In and around that time, I'd say folks are going to have to ask: ‘Is this under sufficient control that we can be confident about going to Tokyo or not?’” he said in an exclusive interview with The Associated Press.

As the games draw near, he said, “a lot of things have to start happening. You've got to start ramping up your security, your food, the Olympic Village, the hotels. The media folks will be in there building their studios.”

If the IOC decides the games cannot go forward as scheduled in Tokyo, “you're probably looking at a cancellation,” he said.

The viral outbreak that began in China two months ago has infected nearly 89,000

people globally and killed more than 3,000, the vast majority of them in China. But the virus has gained a foothold in South Korea, the Middle East, and Europe, raising fears of a pandemic. Japan itself has reported 12 deaths.

Pound encouraged athletes to keep training. About 11,000 are expected for the Olympics, which open July 24, and 4,400 are bound for the Paralympics, which open August 25.

“As far as we all know, you're going to be in Tokyo,” Pound said. “All indications are at this stage that it will be business as usual. So keep focused on your sport and be sure that the IOC is not going to send you into a pandemic situation.”

The modern Olympics, which date to 1896, have been cancelled only during wartime. The Olympics in 1940 were supposed to be in Tokyo but were called off because of Japan's war with China and World War II. The Rio Games in Brazil went on as scheduled in 2016 despite the outbreak of the Zika virus.

Pound repeated the IOC's stance — that it is relying on consultations with the World Health Organization, a United Nations body, to make any move.

As for the possibility of postponement, he said: “You just don't postpone something on the size and scale of the Olympics. There's so many moving parts, so many countries and different seasons, and competitive seasons, and television seasons. You can't just say, ‘We'll do it in October.’”

Pound said moving to another city also seems unlikely “because there are few places in the world that could think of gearing up facilities in that short time to put something on.”

London mayoral candidate Shaun Bailey has suggested the British capital as an alternative. Tokyo governor Yuriko Koike suggested the offer was an attempt to use the virus for political purposes.

Pound said he would not favor a scattering of Olympic events to other places around the world because that wouldn't “constitute an Olympic Games. You'd end up with a series of world championships.” He also said it would be extremely difficult to spread around the various sports over a 17-day period with only a few months notice.

Holding the Olympics in Tokyo but postponing them by a few months would be unlikely to satisfy North American broadcasters, whose schedules are full in the fall

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Doctor's death highlights dangers on front lines of outbreak

By Maria Cheng
The Associated Press

LONDON — The death of a doctor who issued an early warning about the new virus in China represents a grim reminder that the first healthcare workers to recognize new outbreaks are sometimes among their earliest victims.

Dr. Li Wenliang's death underlined the dangers health workers have faced in similar epidemics, including SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) and Ebola.

On December 3, Li wrote on his social-media account that he saw a test sample suggesting the presence of a coronavirus similar to SARS. In early January, the 34-year-old eye doctor was visited by police who forced him to sign a statement admitting to having spread falsehoods.

Within days, he developed a cough and fever, began having trouble breathing, and was hospitalized. His death was confirmed on February 7, prompting a deluge of messages of mourning and outrage at how he was treated.

The death was an all-too-familiar occurrence, said Dr. Michael Ryan, head of the World Health Organization's (WHO) health emergencies program.

“We're very sorry to hear the loss of any healthcare worker that's attempted to care for patients,” Ryan said. “We have suffered similar losses like the death of Carlo Urbani during SARS.”

In 2003, Urbani was an Italian doctor at the U.N. health agency's Hanoi office and investigated the unusual case of a patient suffering respiratory symptoms in a private hospital. Urbani treated patients, took samples, and worked to improve infection control policies in Hanoi.

Weeks later, he died of the same disease — SARS — in a Bangkok hospital.

Doctors working at the early stages of any new outbreak are particularly



DOCTOR'S DEATH. Dr. Li Wenliang is seen at the Central Hospital of Wuhan in central China's Hubei province on February 3, 2020. The doctor's death days later underlines the dangers health workers face during epidemics. (Beijing Thanksgiving Public Welfare Foundation via AP)

vulnerable, said Dr. Bharat Pankhania, a University of Exeter infectious disease expert.

“At the beginning, doctors are just not aware of what kind of behaviors may be dangerous,” he said. When Li was exposed to the new virus, “he didn't know an outbreak was already underway and what precautions he should take,” Pankhania said.

Doctors and nurses also were infected in the early stages of multiple Ebola outbreaks, before the lethal disease was recognized and proper infection control policies were implemented.

“It's just bad timing,” Pankhania said. “Doctors get infected because they are in the wrong place at the wrong time.”

Among people infected in the current outbreak, 82% have suffered only mild disease, WHO estimated. Fatal cases have been most common in people over 60 years old and those with other health problems, like diabetes or high blood pressure. Fewer than 2% have died, according to the latest

figures.

Li, however, may have been at risk for a more serious illness because he was treating patients before he knew to take any precautions, doctors said. He also may have been exposed to an especially large dose, given that eye doctors tend to work close to patients' faces.

A study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* underscored the dangers faced by healthcare workers.

The report detailed illnesses in 138 people treated at Zhongnan Hospital in Wuhan, including 40 hospital workers believed to have become infected on the job. More than 10 of them were presumed to have been infected by a single patient who was admitted to the surgical ward with abdominal symptoms.

Patients also apparently infected other patients, the researchers said. The patients were all adults, adding to evidence that suggests cases in children are rare.

WHO warned that increased demand for masks and other protective equipment might further jeopardize health workers responding to the outbreak.

WHO's director-general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, noted that prices have skyrocketed and that there were insufficient quantities of masks and respirators to meet the demands of WHO and its partners.

The problem has been exacerbated by inappropriate use of equipment such as masks, gloves, and gowns, he said.

“We need to make sure we get it to the people who need it the most,” he said. “Our first priority is health workers.”

Jamey Keaten in Geneva and Lindsey Tanner in Chicago contributed to this report. The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.