Review of “Serial interval of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) infections”


One-Minute Summary

- Using data from 28 pairs of index and secondary cases, the authors estimate a serial interval, the time from illness onset in an index case to illness onset in the secondary case, of COVID-19.
- The median serial interval was estimated at four days (95% CrI, 3.1-4.9).
- When limited to 18 pairs of cases for whom reporting data was more certain, the median serial interval was estimated at 4.6 days (95% CrI: 3.5-5.9).
- The authors report the median serial interval is close to or shorter than preliminary estimates of the median incubation period (cited as five days), suggesting that transmission may occur before illness onset.

Additional Information

- Serials intervals help to understand transmissibility and turnover of case generations.
- The authors considered dates of illness onset extracted from an academic article as “certain” (n=18).
- It is possible that available data during the early stage of an epidemic may exclude pairs with longer serial intervals.

PHO Reviewer’s Comments

- The confidence interval for the median serial interval estimated using the higher quality data overlaps with estimated incubation periods reported elsewhere.
- The sources used for illness onset dates ranged in quality. These included media reports, as well as epidemiological investigations summarized in peer-reviewed journals.

Citation


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