

Pandemic: Communication in Stressful Situations

Case Example

TV announcer:

The World Health Organization is reporting more than 100 deaths worldwide from SARS. 78-year old Sui-Chu Kwan died at home in Toronto shortly after arriving at Toronto Pearson Airport from Hong Kong. Kwan's son contracted SARS and died less than two weeks later at a Scarborough hospital.

Mother:

Honey? David? We're going to go get in the car now, okay?
Come on. Let's stand up.

TV announcer:

Surgical masks continue to disappear from store shelves as public fear grows about the spread of the highly contagious disease.

Father:

Hello?

Mother:

Frank? Frank. He's worse. I'm going to take him to the hospital now.
Well, just meet us there, okay?

TV announcer:

There are 30 reported deaths due to SARS in the Toronto area.

Host:

The SARS outbreak of 2003 raised the country's consciousness regarding emergency preparedness planning. The people of the province of Ontario feared for their health in the face of the first truly global pandemic. As health professionals, what have we learned from outbreaks like SARS and H1N1 - about the spread of the disease?