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Scoop from @CNN's @npwcnn: an internal document leaked from Hubei province, the initial epicenter of the #COVID19 pandemic, CNN found that the number of confirmed cases listed on February 10 is double the amount of the official number in public. <https://t.co/WzyXREAYQ4>

"The previously undisclosed figure is among a string of revelations contained within 117 pages of leaked documents from the Hubei Provincial Center for Disease Control and Prevention, shared with and verified by CNN."

"The documents, which cover an incomplete period between October 2019 and April this year, reveal what appears to be an inflexible health care system constrained by top-down bureaucracy and rigid procedures that were ill-equipped to deal with the emerging crisis."

"One of the more striking data points concerns the slowness with which local Covid-19 patients were diagnosed. Even as authorities in Hubei presented their handling of the initial outbreak to the public as efficient and transparent,...

... the documents show that local health officials were reliant on flawed testing and reporting mechanisms. A report in the documents from early March says the average time between the onset of symptoms to confirmed diagnosis was 23.3 days, which experts have told CNN...

... would have significantly hampered steps to both monitor and combat the disease."

"It was clear they did make mistakes -- and not just mistakes that happen when you're dealing with a novel virus -- also bureaucratic and politically-motivated errors in how they handled it," said @YanzhongHuang.

"These had global consequences. You can never guarantee 100% transparency. It's not just about any intentional cover-up, you are also constrained with by technology and other issues with a novel virus.

But even if they had been 100% transparent, that would not stop the Trump administration downplaying the seriousness of it. It would probably not have stopped this developing into a pandemic."

"At the same time that the virus is believed to have first emerged, the documents show another health crisis was unfolding: Hubei was dealing with a significant influenza outbreak. It caused cases to rise to 20 times the level recorded the previous year,...

... the documents show, placing enormous levels of additional stress on an already stretched health care system."

"The files were presented to CNN by a whistleblower who requested anonymity. They said they worked inside the Chinese healthcare system, and were a patriot motivated to expose a truth that had been censored, and honor colleagues who had also spoken out."

"The documents have been verified by six independent experts who examined the veracity of their content on behalf of CNN. One expert with close ties to China reported seeing some of the reports during confidential research earlier this year."

"The documents show a wide-range of data on two specific days, February 10 and March 7, that is often at odds with what officials said publicly at the time. This discrepancy was likely due to a combination of a highly dysfunctional reporting system...

... and a recurrent instinct to suppress bad news, said analysts. These documents show the full extent of what officials knew, but chose not to spell out to the public."

"On February 10, when China reported 2,478 new confirmed cases nationwide, the documents show Hubei actually circulated a different total of 5,918 newly reported cases. The internal number is divided into subcategories, providing an insight...

... into the full scope of Hubei's diagnosis methodology at the time. "Confirmed cases" number 2,345, "clinically diagnosed cases" 1,772, and "suspected cases" 1,796."

The strict and limiting criteria led ultimately to misleading figures, said analysts. "A lot of the suspected cases there should have been included with the confirmed cases," said Huang, from the Council on Foreign Relations.

"The numbers they were giving out were conservative, and this reflects how confusing, complex and chaotic the situation was," he added.

"That month, Hubei officials presented a daily number of "confirmed cases," and then included later in their statements "suspected cases," without specifying the number of seriously ill patients who had been diagnosed by doctors as being "clinically diagnosed."

Often in nationwide tolls, officials would give the daily new "confirmed" cases, and provide a running tally for the entire pandemic of "suspected cases," also into which it seems the "clinically diagnosed" were added.

This use of a broad "suspected case" tally effectively downplayed the severity of patients who doctors had seen and determined were infected, according to stringent criteria, experts said.

William Schaffner, professor of infectious diseases at Vanderbilt University, said Chinese officials "seemed actually to minimize the impact of the epidemic at any moment in time. To include patients who were suspected of having the infection obviously...

... would have expanded the size of outbreak and would have given, I think, a truer appreciation of the nature of the infection and its size."