

The Reality of the Developments of COVID-19 Epidemic in USA and the Government's Preparedness and Response

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Introduction

The current pandemic disease called as Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) dates back to 31 December 2019, when the World Health Organization (WHO) has been informed in cases of pneumonia with unknown etiology and unknown cause which has been detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China. After couple of days, on 11 and 12 January 2020, relatively more information about the novel virus was communicated to WHO from the National Health Commission China stating that the outbreak has an association to exposures in one seafood market in Wuhan City. On January 12, 2020 the genetic sequence of the novel corona virus has been identified and shared by China so that countries of the world will be able to develop and use specific diagnostic kits. After this on 13 January, 2020, the first imported case of lab-confirmed novel corona virus (2019-nCoV) has been reported from the Ministry of Public Health of Thailand specifying that it was imported from Wuhan, China. Since the day the new unknown virus has been reported to WHO, within 21 days 282 lab-confirmed cases have been reported from four countries including the month China (278 cases), Thailand (2 cases), Japan (1 case) and the Republic of Korea (1 case). The reports of these countries showed that it. The report disclosed that the cases in Thailand, Japan and Republic of Korea were specifically imported from China, Wuhan City. In fact, 258 cases of the 278 confirmed cases in China were reported from Hubei Province. Of course, during this time period, of the 278 cases, six deaths have been reported from Wuhan City. ¹

As of 10 April 2020, the number of cases has grown globally to 1,521,252 confirmed cases, of which 92,798 deaths. Regionally, in European Region there are 799,696 confirmed and 66,213 deaths; Region of the Americas 493,173 confirmed cases and 17,038 deaths; Western Pacific Region 117,247 confirmed cases and 3,978 deaths; Eastern Mediterranean Region 88,657 confirmed cases and 4,607 deaths; South-East Asia Region 12,978 confirmed cases and 569 deaths; and the least recorded cases being in African Region that accounts to 8,789 confirmed cases and 382 deaths. The overall assessment of the risk is revealed by WHO as very high risk.²

¹ WHO (2020), Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV), Situation Report - 1, 21 January, 2020.

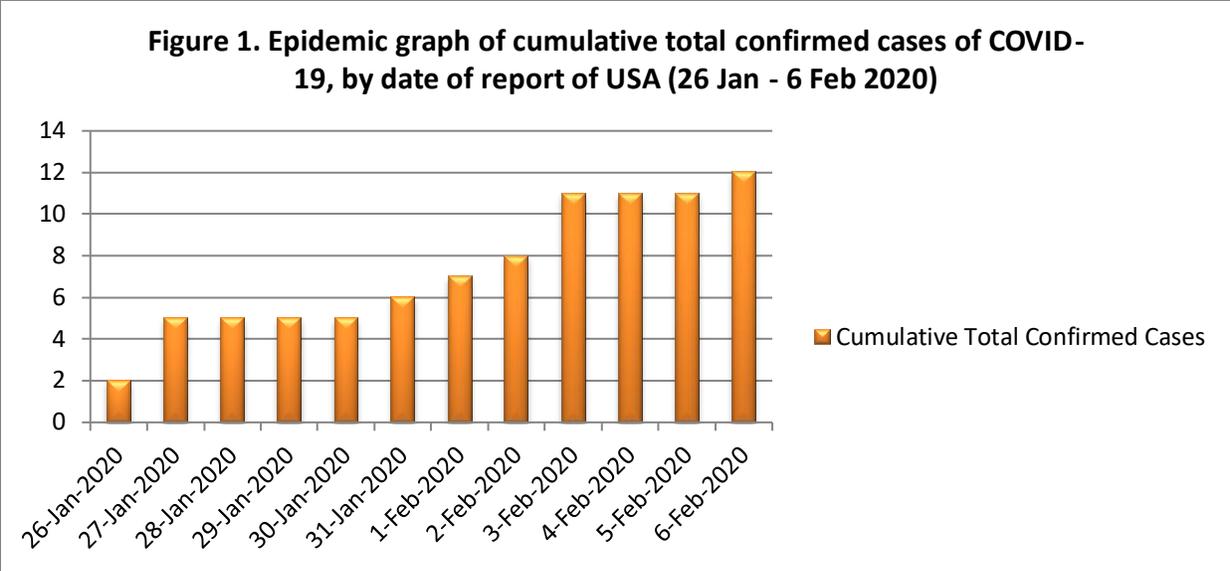
² WHO (2020), Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), Situation Report – 81, 10 April 2020.

As an agent of the global community, WHO supposedly executes its mission working with 194 member States across six regions combatting diseases – communicable and non-communicable diseases to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the world community. It is its routine duty to work on ensuring and enhancing and the preparedness of countries of the world and governments' response to diseases timely. In accordance, this exploratory study has been initiated to examine the preparedness and response of the United States of America (USA) government and the actual discharge of the responsibilities of WHO in line with its mission with particular emphasis to the novel corona virus COVID-19 declared as pandemic by the WHO.

To support the study with facts on the ground, statistical daily data as reported by each country to the WHO is used. The data used for this study may not include those infections and deaths from COVID-19 that likely happens in houses that are not included in the reports of the countries. The data are analyzed using graphs taking both the confirmed cases and death in absolute figures. To allow for convenience of presenting the facts the graphs are presented separately for confirmed cases and deaths. In addition, to allow visibility and convenience of presentation, the graphs are presented breaking the case and death occurrences broken in intervals. Moreover, the number of confirmed cases and deaths used in this study include both domestic and imported of United States of America (USA).

Analysis

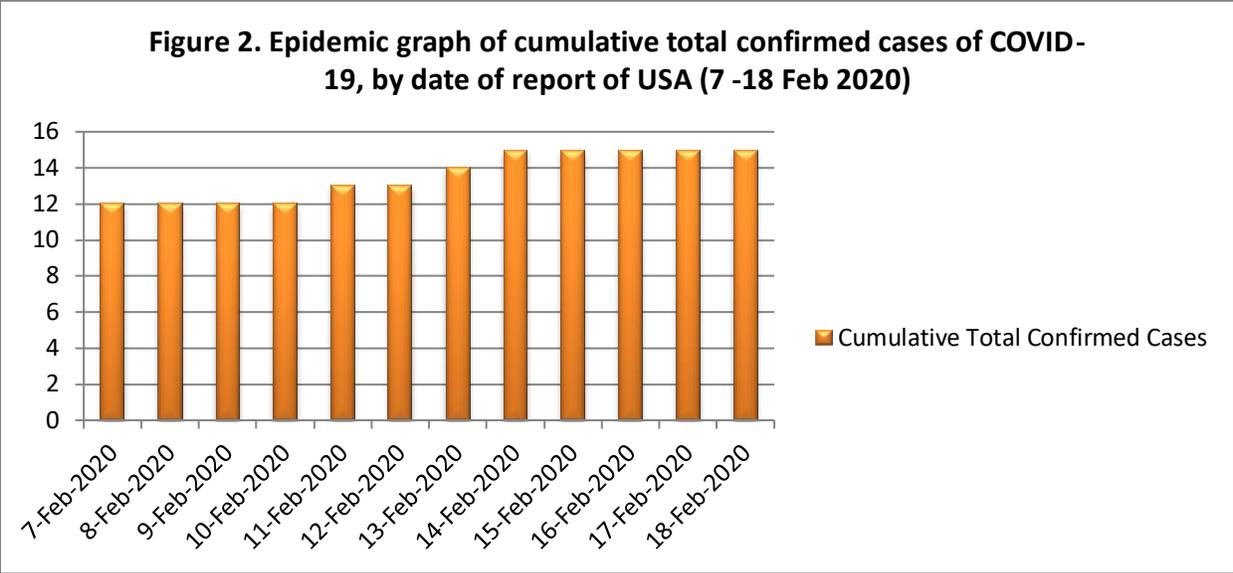
It is obvious that currently, our world is shaken up by the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The World Health Organization has declared this disease as pandemic that the world community, State governments, and take all necessary preparations to protect from its consequences. To examine whether WHO has disclosed the situation about the COVID-19 since the time the existence of the new virus has been suspected till its etiology has been specified and awareness of USA government on this issue, let's have a look at pattern and trend of the confirmed cases and deaths starting from 26 January to 6 February 2020 as shown in Figure-1 below.



Source: Based on the data collected from the series of daily country report to World Health Organization (WHO).

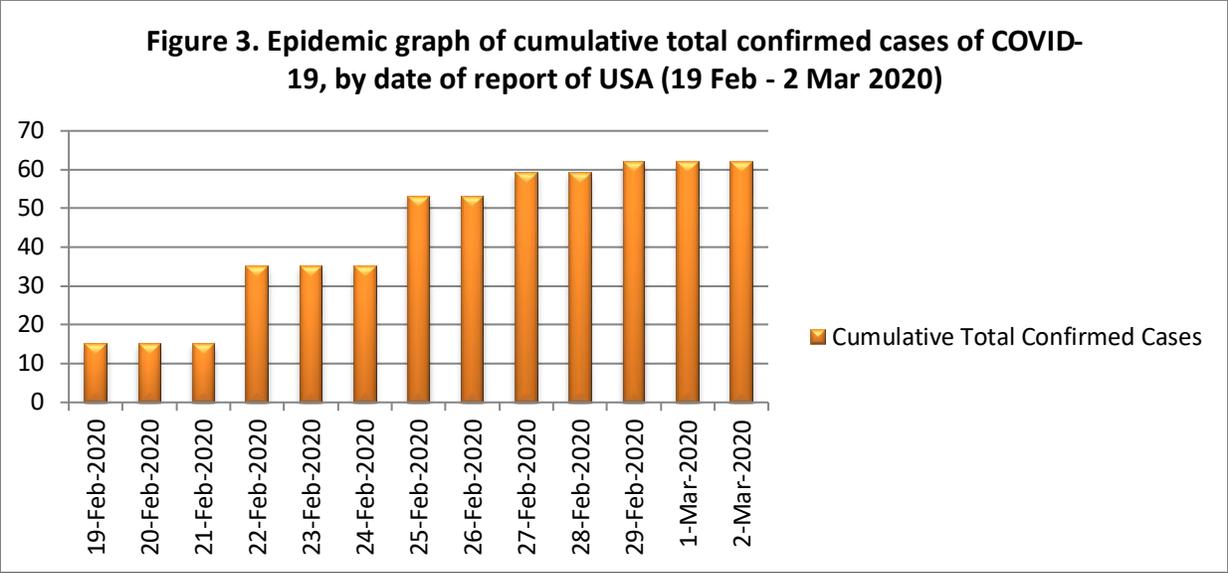
It can be understood that since the day in which the genetic sequence of the novel corona virus has been identified and shared by China on January 12, 2020, just after two USA has reported to WHO that it has two confirmed COVID-19 cases, increased to more than twice in the next day and steadily increasing in the ten reporting days reaching 12 confirmed cases on the tenth day (6 February, 2020). The figure reveals that there are no deaths from COVID-19 in USA during the twelve days. This implies that USA was cognizant of the fact that the deadly virus has infected people in its political territory much earlier as evidenced by its report to WHO.

With regard to the developments of the COVID-19 in USA in the next 12 days is presented as shown in the Figure-2 shown below. The figure clearly shows that the number of confirmed cases has increased from 12 to more than 14. It is disclosed that in 12 days, more than three persons were infected by COVID-19 in USA. As this report emanates from USA, there is no reason to state that USA was ignorant of the occurrence of the virus infection and its exposure towards the deadly virus.



Source: Based on the data collected from the series of daily country report to World Health Organization (WHO).

The situation of the spread of the COVID-19 in USA in the next thirteen days is shown in Figure-3. It is disclose that the number of confirmed cases has increased from below 20 to above 50 in just thirteen days (19 February to 2 March 2020). Moreover, despite the accelerated rate of increases in the number of COVID-19 confirmed infections, no deaths have occurred. The non-occurrence of death from COVID-19 during this time might have negatively influenced the US government not to give it due attention to take action to prevent it from its early stage. However, the severity of the outbreak of this deadly virus in China has been repeatedly become head line and one of the top news in the world that made millions of world people worried about it.



Source: Based on the data collected from the series of daily country report to World Health Organization (WHO).

The statistics of the confirmed cases and death from COVID-19 in USA in the next ten days (3-12 March 2020) is as portrayed in Figure-4 and Figure-5. The trend of the increment of confirmed cases is shown in Figure-4, and the trend of deaths from COVID-19 is shown in Figure-5. The increase in confirmed cases has increased alarmingly shifting from being below 50 to hundreds reaching almost 1000 cases in the tenth. The study reveals that the ten days period, 3-12 March 2020, was the period that deaths from COVID-19 in USA has been recorded and reported to the WHO. It was on 3 March USA has reported two deaths for the first time to World Health Organization (WHO). The number of deaths has increased steadily within these ten days reaching more than 25 cumulative deaths by 12 March 2020. This implies that the US government was cognizant of the fact that the deadly virus is not only infecting people in USA, but also killing as evidenced from the report that emanates from the official reports of the country. From 3 March 2020 onwards the trend doesn't show only confirmed cases but also the looming of deaths. This situation would have served as a serious siren, ganger signal that alarms the US government to get prepared and take proactive measures to safeguard the health and lives of people.

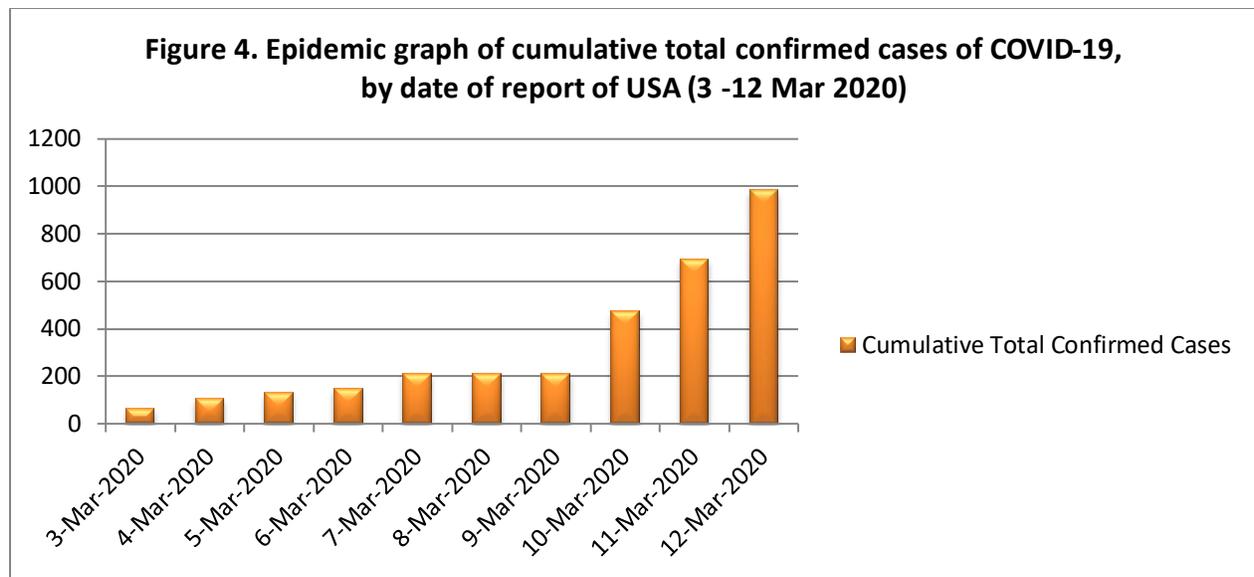
Less attention has been given by Trump as can be evidenced from the various speeches he used to make publicly. During this time some of the speeches made by Trump are:

Trump stated as "Now, the virus that we're talking about having to do—you know, a lot of people think that goes away in April with the heat—as the heat comes in. Typically, that will go away in April. We're in great shape though." February 10, 2020.

Trump stated as "Coronavirus is going to disappear. One day—it's like a miracle—it will disappear." Feb 28, 2020. In contrast to Trump's idea, Robert Redfield, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said in an interview on CNN that the virus was likely here to stay, possibly for months.

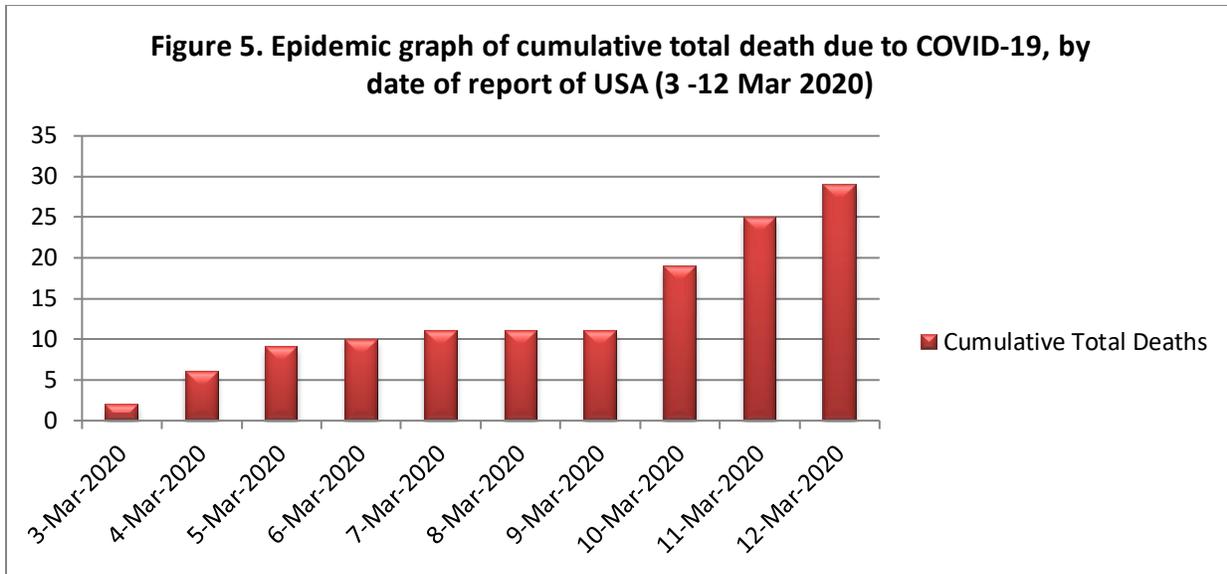
"Now the Democrats are politicizing the coronavirus. You know that, right? Corona virus. They're politicizing it ... And this is their new hoax." In fact, during this time, the U.S. had confirmed 60 cases of coronavirus. The CDC had already warned the public to prepare for the virus to spread, assuring them that this was not a hoax. Feb 28, 2020

"The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the need for rigorous science, demonstrating—in real time—what the consequences can be when world leaders pay inadequate attention to what that science says. In his response to COVID-19, President Donald Trump has made statements that ignore, question or distort mainstream science. But long before the virus arrived—even before he became president—he was using similar techniques to deny climate change." Katelyn Weisbrod (March 19, 2020)³



Source: Based on the data collected from the series of daily country report to World Health Organization (WHO).

³ Katelyn Weisbrod, (March 19, 2020), <https://insideclimatenews.org/news/19032020/denial-climate-change-coronavirus-donald-trump>, accessed on 11 April, 2020.

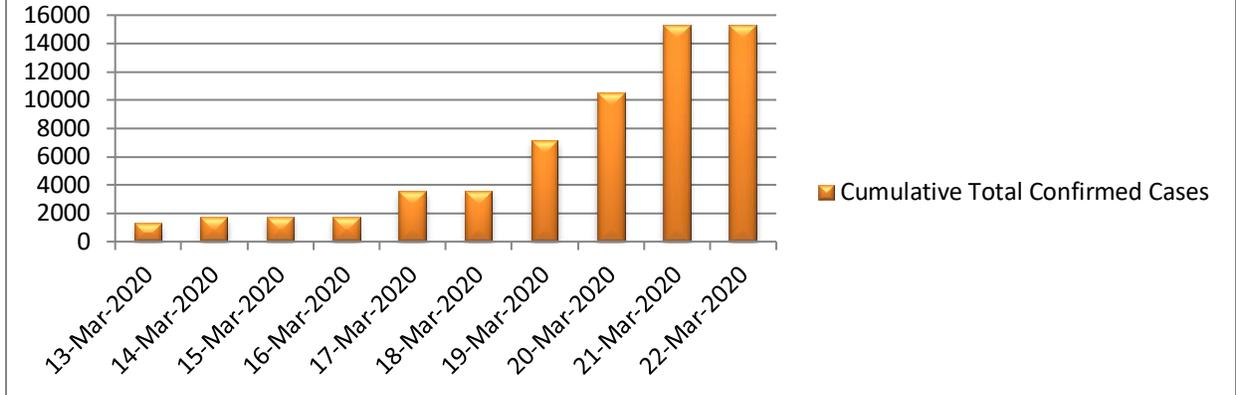


Source: Based on the data collected from the series of daily country report to World Health Organization (WHO).

The development of the pandemic COVID-19 In the next ten days (13-22, March 2020), both the confirmed cases and deaths are shown in the following Figure-6 and Figure-7 respectively. Figure-6 shows that increment trend in the number of confirmed cases has grown alarmingly from about 1000 in the first day of these ten days, 13 March 2020, to more than 14000 in the tenth day (22 March 2020).

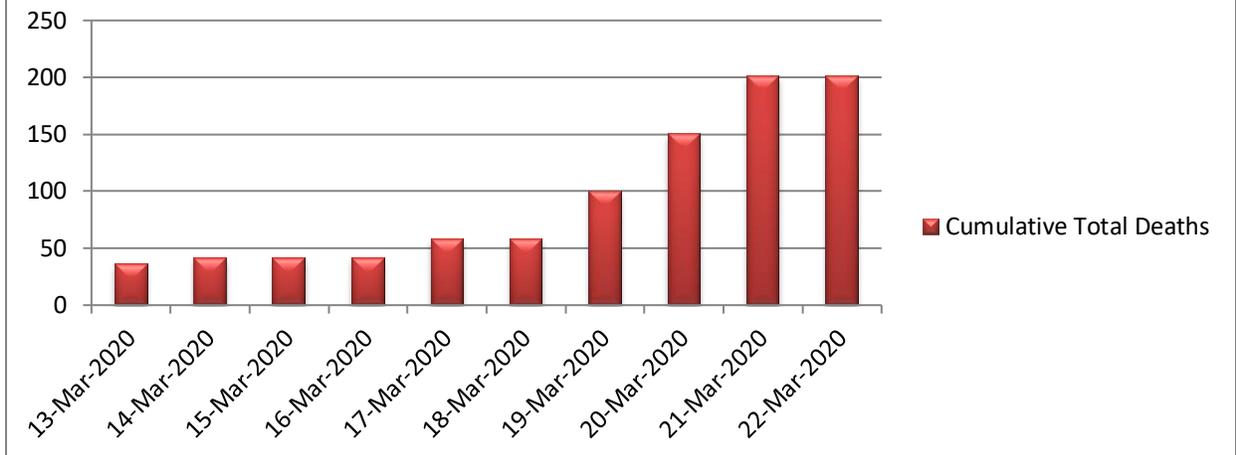
With regard to the trend of number of deaths, as shown in Figure-7, it has grown from more than 50 in the first day of the decade to a cumulative toll of 200 by the end of the decade (22 March 2020). This implies that the pandemic virus has become a very clear threat to USA as evidenced by the confirmed cases and deaths reports of the country by itself. This trend is beyond an alarm to the US government to take bold measures in containing the pandemic and reducing infections and deaths. It is crystal clear that US government should seriously follow mitigation measure recommendations of the apex body World Health Organization (WHO), health experts and similar authorized institutions.

Figure 6. Epidemic graph of cumulative total confirmed cases of COVID-19, by date of report of USA (13-22 Mar 2020)



Source: Based on the data collected from the series of daily country report to World Health Organization (WHO).

Figure 7. Epidemic graph of cumulative total death due to COVID-19, by date of report of USA (13 -22 Mar 2020)



Source: Based on the data collected from the series of daily country report to World Health Organization (WHO).

Similarly, the epidemic COVID-19 confirmed cases and deaths of USA in the next decade from 23 March to 1 April 2020 are displayed in the following Figure-8 and Figure-9 respectively. The growth trend trajectory continues at a higher speed in the number of both confirmed cases and deaths. Specifically, the total number of cumulative confirmed cases

has grown from a little bit more than 30,000 in the first day of the decade (23 March 2020) to more than 160,000 by the end of the decade (1 April 2020). As can be seen from the graph it is growing at an alarming rate.

Regarding the increase in the cumulative deaths, the graph shows that it has increased steadily in this decade from about 500 deaths in the first day (23 March 2020) to more than 2800 in the tenth day of the decade (1 April 2020). This implies that COVID-19 has increased and become a critical factor that affects the life of people in the USA. It is high time for the US government to take proactive and reactive measures to contain the virus's epidemic expansion in the whole country with vigorous and strong cooperation and partnership with the apex organization WHO, world country governments, and all institutions of the world.

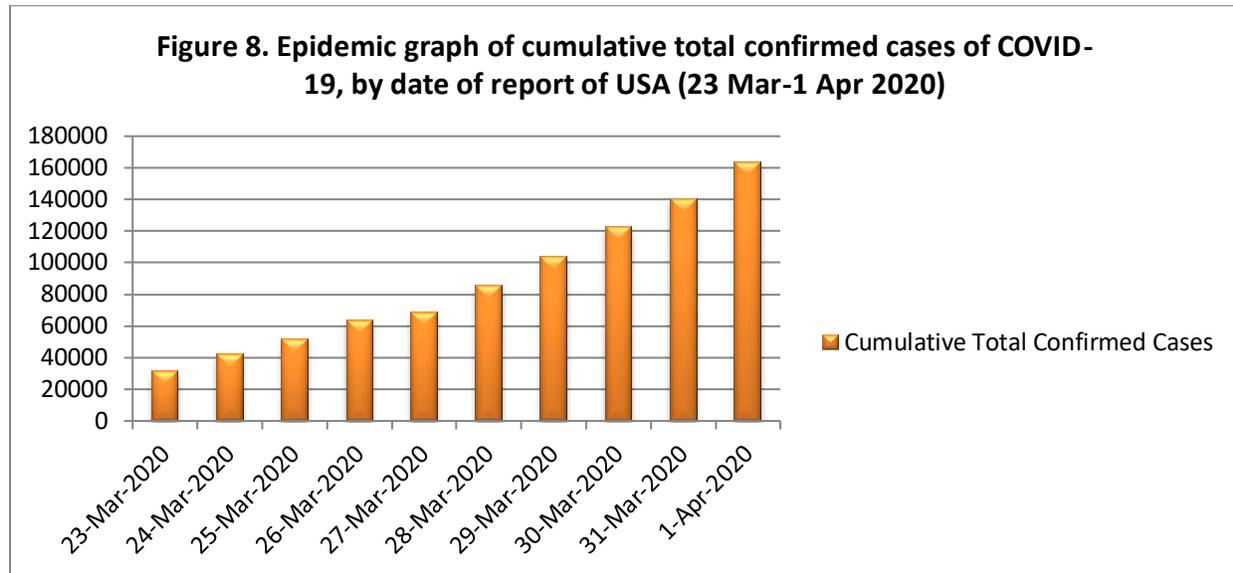
As far as the World Health Organization is concerned, as its main purpose it used to inform Member States and stakeholders by publishing series of reports. This can be supported by the evidence which states as "... WHO has been in regular and direct contact with Member States where cases have been reported. WHO is also informing other countries about the situation and providing support as requested. ... it developed interim guidance for laboratory diagnosis, clinical management, infection prevention and control in health care settings, home care for patients with suspected novel coronavirus, risk communication and community engagement. WHO prepared disease commodity packages for supplies necessary in identification and management of confirmed patients. It provided recommendations to reduce risk of transmission from animals to humans..."⁴

This week, U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams promised that we're entering the darkest days of the Covid-19 epidemic: "This is going to be our Pearl Harbor moment, our 9/11 moment. Only, it's not going to be localized, it's going to be happening all over the country. And I want America to understand that," Adams told Fox News' Chris Wallace. Adams' metaphor, evoking the two deadliest—and most shocking—moments of modern American history, came on the fourth consecutive day that U.S. deaths from Covid-19 crossed the 1,000 mark. Across Saturday, Sunday and Monday, more Americans were killed by the novel coronavirus than in either Pearl Harbor, the 9/11 attacks or the Civil War battle of Antietam. The days ahead surely will include an even grimmer toll.

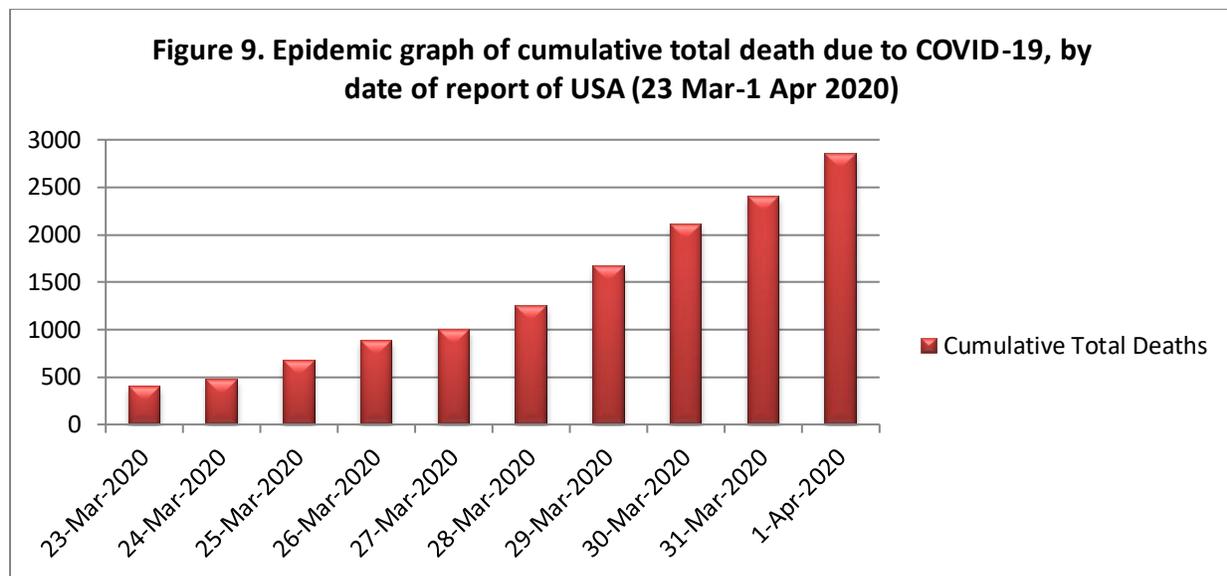
Yet Adams' metaphor of this as our new "9/11 moment" is more apt than he likely intended: Comparing the events is about more than just a story of casualties—it is also a story about government's failure. Both Pearl Harbor and the 9/11 attacks occurred, in part, because the U.S. government and intelligence failed to see the attacks looming. We were caught unprepared, and Americans paid for that mistake with their lives. Moreover, President Donald Trump's routine, day-to-day mismanagement of the government has left both organizations—the very entities we tasked as a nation to prevent the next 9/11—

⁴ WHO (2020), Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV), Situation Report - 7, 27 January, 2020.

riddled with vacancies and temporary officials as the novel coronavirus rapidly spread from a small blip in China to a global health and economic catastrophe. (Fox News, 2020)⁵



Source: Based on the data collected from the series of daily country report to World Health Organization (WHO).

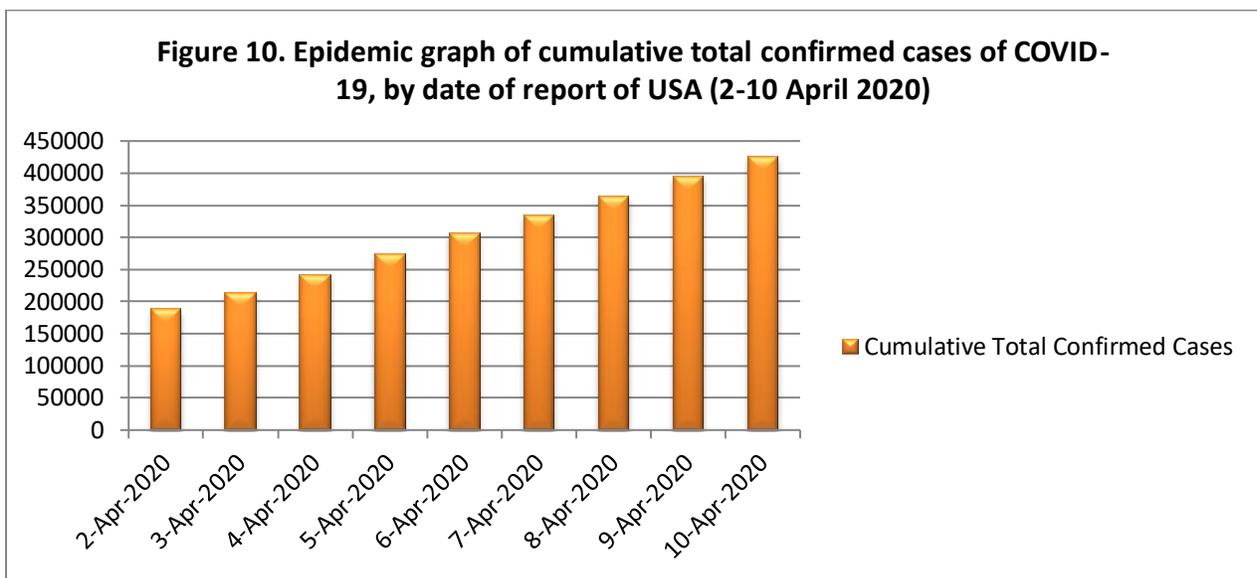


⁵ Fox News (2020), <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/04/07/trump-dismantled-the-very-jobs-meant-to-stop-the-covid-19-epidemic-173347>, accessed on 11 April, 2020

Source: Based on the data collected from the series of daily country report to World Health Organization (WHO).

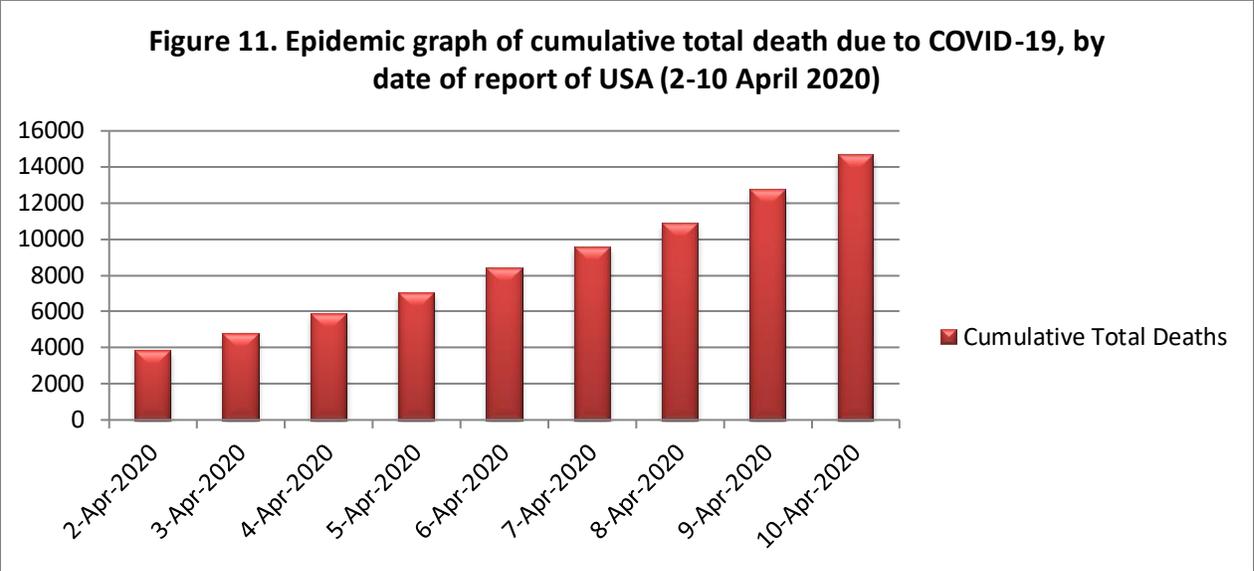
The latest developments of COVID-19 of USA, both confirmed cases and deaths are displayed in the following Figure-10 and Figure-11 respectively. It is revealed that the number of confirmed cases has grown drastically from a little bit more than 180,000 in the first day (2 March 2020) to more than 400,000 in the ninth day. The death toll as well has risen from more than 3800 in the first day (2 March 2020) to more than 14000 on the last day (10 March 2020). The study revealed that both confirmed cases and deaths have an increasing trend implying that the likelihood of flattening in the few days to come is unlikely. Hence, concerted effort should be strengthened by all parties including the government. The sharp increment trend as depicted by the graph shows the minimal effort or attention given by US government. Had proactive and reactive measures were taken by the incumbent government right from the time USA started reporting confirmed cases on 26 January 2020, the rate of increment would have been reduced, the flattening of the curve and reaching of an early peak of the pandemic would have been possible.

This can be supported by the view stated by Ron Klain and John Heilemann tell Lawrence O'Donnell (2020) as "it's just the latest attempt in a pattern of "blame shifting." Aired on 04/09/2020.⁶



Source: Based on the data collected from the series of daily country report to World Health Organization (WHO).

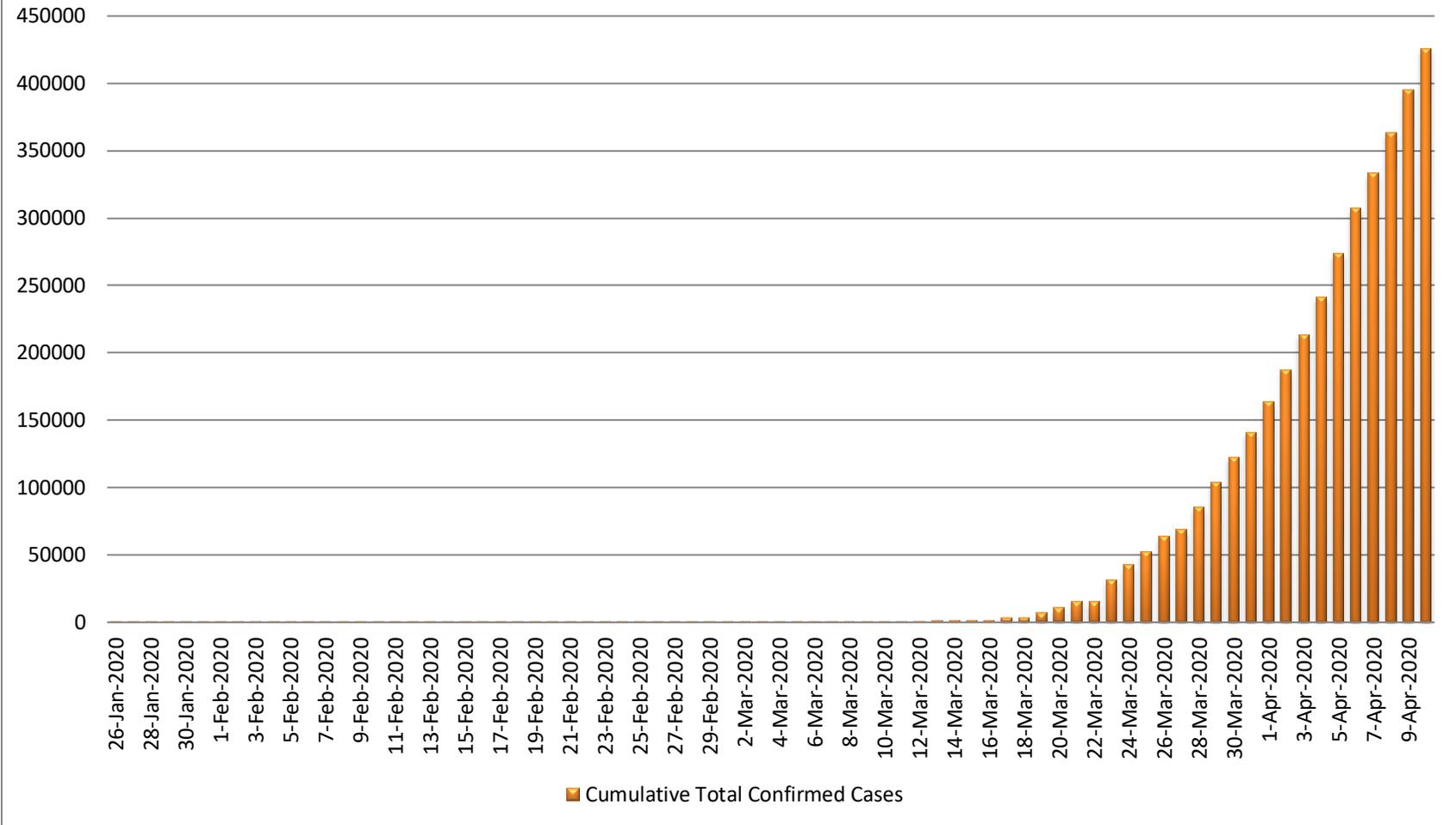
⁶ MSNBC: <http://on.msnbc.com/SubscribeTomsnbc> , accessed on 11 April, 2020



Source: Based on the data collected from the series of daily country report to World Health Organization (WHO).

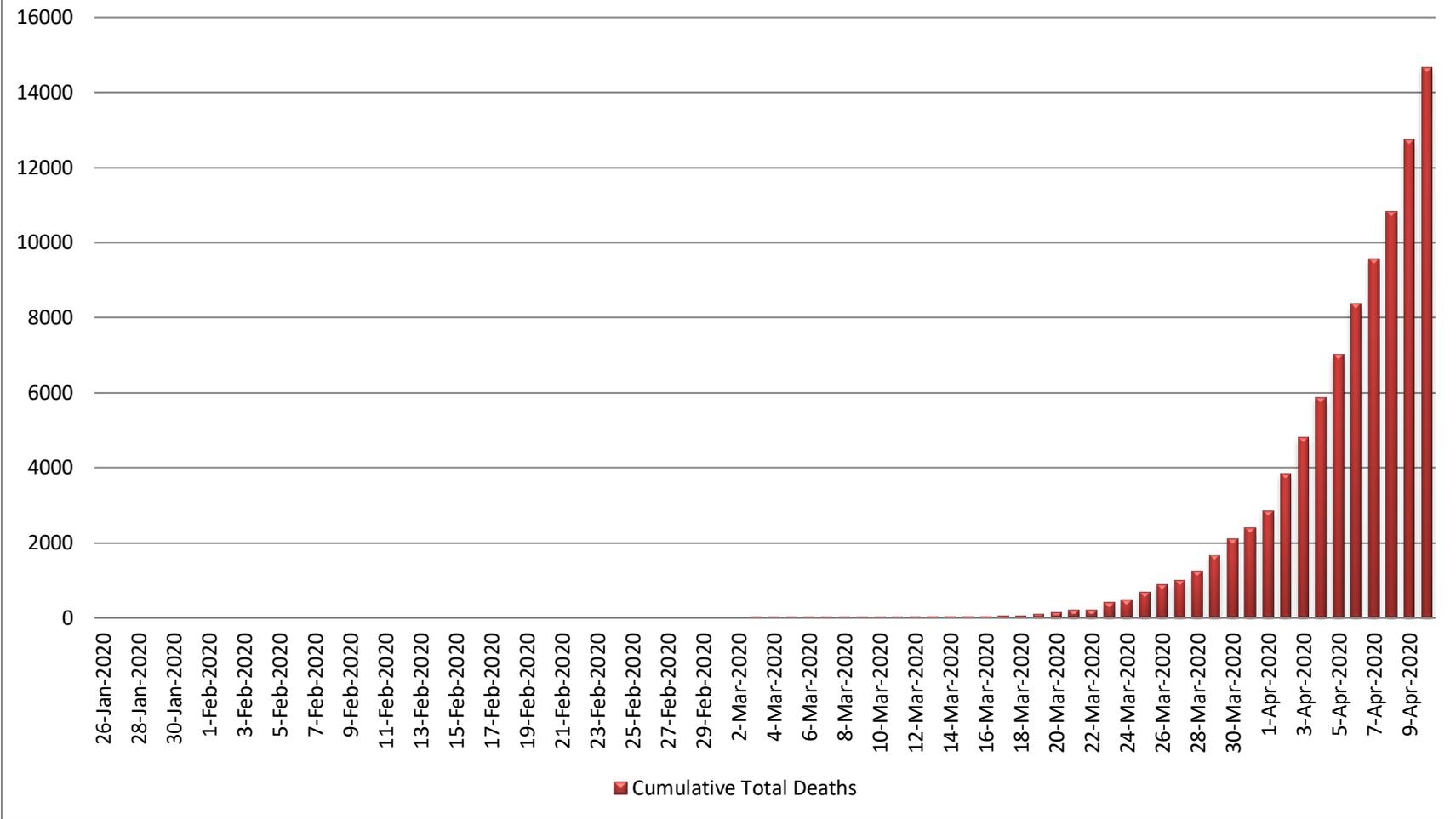
The overall cumulative trend of bot the COVID-19 of USA from the time US started reporting confirmed cases on 26 January 2020 to 10 April 2020 and the death tolls are presented in Figure-12 and Figure-13 respectively as given below.

**Figure 12. Epidemic graph of cumulative total confirmed cases of COVID-19, by date of report of USA
(26 Jan -10 April 2020)**



Source: Based on the data collected from the series of daily country report to World Health Organization (WHO).

Figure 13. Epidemic graph of cumulative total death due to COVID-19, by date of report of USA (26 Jan -10 April 2020)



Source: Based on the data collected from the series of daily country report to World Health Organization (WHO).

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the outbreak of COVID-19, the potential threat to infect the people of United States and its adverse consequences if not prevented were oversimplified by US government. Despite the frequent recommendations provided from the apex body, World Health Organization, on how to deal with the novel COVID-19 spread; significant proactive and reactive measures were not taken by the incumbent government. The readiness to benchmark the mitigation measures that have been in action by East Asian countries, and the time advantage USA had, since the novel virus appeared in Asia, to get prepared and respond accordingly was overlooked by US government. Moreover, the readiness of the US government to scientific advises particularly with issues related to COVID-19 was not significant.