A woman traveling from China to Boston unknowingly became a carrier of SARS- the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. The primary symptoms of the SARS are flu-like in nature, including fever, lethargy, gastrointestinal symptoms, cough and sore throat. Therefore, most initial cases were misdiagnosed as a common flu. Due to shortage of nurses and beds in greater Boston area emergency rooms, infected patients were not identified as contagious with a highly dangerous disease and were often placed in hallways or in shared rooms, increasing the spread of the disease.

SARS was identified in a patient at Mass General Hospital and was communicated to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, with currently 3,500 suspected cases across the greater Boston area and 250 deaths.

The disease is spreading quickly through families and tight-knit communities, and as word is getting out about the disease, more and more people are fearful and are flocking to local emergency rooms. This is stressing the already maxed out hospitals and is increasing the spread of the disease.

Furthermore, as Boston is a huge hub for travel across the world, there is concern that SARS will spread outside Boston and will quickly become an international pandemic if not treated quickly.

**SARS Information:**

Mortality by age group is below 1% for people aged 24 or younger, 6% for those 25 to 44, 15% in those 45 to 64 and more than 50% for those over 65. For comparison, the case fatality rate for influenza is usually around 0.6% (primarily among the elderly) but can rise as high as 33% in locally severe epidemics of new strains. The mortality rate of the primary viral pneumonia form is about 70%.

* Antibiotics are ineffective as SARS is a viral disease. Treatment of SARS so far has been largely supportive with antipyretics, supplemental oxygen and ventilatory support as needed.
* Suspected cases of SARS must be isolated, preferably in negative pressure rooms, with complete barrier nursing precautions taken for any necessary contact with these patients.
* There was initially anecdotal support for steroids and the antiviral drug ribavirin, but no published evidence has supported this therapy.

**Roles and Descriptions:**

* **Mayor of Boston:** As the Mayor, you are responsible for the health and wellbeing of your citizens. However, you recognize that you don’t have the medical expertise to handle this event. You have to trust your fellow team members while keeping the perspective of trying to stop the spread and treat the infected people as fast as possible. You do not want this disaster to affect the amount of people visiting, doing business, and bringing money into the city of Boston.
* **Massachusetts Public Health Administrator:**You are concerned with the overall health of the majority of people. Therefore, you are focused on how to maintain health care and emergency services for people who will continue to be sick and injured with issues unrelated to the SARS outbreak. You also are concerned with issues that may escalate the spread, such as proper disposal of infected blankets and clothes in hospitals or in private homes.
* **Representative of the World Health Organization (WHO):** The WHO is responsible for tracking and minimizing pandemic incidents on an international level. The WHO’s main mission is to isolate any infectious diseases or outbreaks to the region/country in which they initially exist. As the WHO representative, you are not as concerned about what is going on in Boston, but you are concerned that the other planners are not going to prioritize shutting down access of the SARS disease outside of Boston. You are interested in sending out a ‘no fly’ alert to global networks, causing Logan Airport to virtually shut down and lose the majority of its incoming travelers.
* **Director of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):** In disease outbreaks, you know that the most powerful tool is isolation of patients and if necessary, quarantining people, parts of hospitals, and even entire communities within a city. You want to learn as much as possible about this disease quickly so that you can end the spread and implement a cure as soon as possible. You are concerned with the science behind the disease so that you can get people to put together treatments and vaccinations to fight this disease.
* **Chief of Emergency at Massachusetts General Hospital:** This type of incident is an indicator of a broader problem with the health care system in the country. There are not enough doctors, nurses, beds, and rooms for the number of people that need them, especially when an emergency occurs. You are an advocate for your staff and your patients, you want quick financial support and additional workers to staff your hospital.
* **Professor of Infectious Disease at Local University:** You have been brought into the team because of your expertise studying the SARS disease. You know that Ribavirin is the most common and probably most effective steroid type drug for SARS and that it can take weeks to get enough of the drug to reach all the infected people in the area.