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Pandemic (United States): Corona Virus Rages as Trump Does Nothing

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A new upturn in reported cases began in September, rose steadily, and then began to accelerate. Measured as a seven day moving average of new cases daily (which smooth's out daily reporting fluctuations) as of October 26 there were about 70,000 new cases per day and growing.

This exceeds the previous high of around 65,000 set this summer. Scientists predict that it will be 100,000 per day in a few weeks, but not stop there.

Hospitalizations, which lag behind new cases, have begun to increase. Deaths will follow.

Since the pandemic began in the U.S., there have been two peaks of new cases and now we are heading up rapidly again.

The first peak was about 30,000 in early spring, and then the Trump administration ordered a shutdown of all but essential areas of activity (health, food, transportation, etc.)

This was the only time the Trump administration acted to curtail the virus.

The virus continued to spread at a reduced rate, as the use of masks and social distancing, avoiding large crowds, and such measures were implemented in some states and not others, and there were new cases among essential workers, including among nurses.

The downturn in cases leveled off at above 20,000. Trump then called for the whole economy to reopen by the end of May, which was done without caution in some states and more carefully and measured in others, and a new upsurge of cases began that peaked in early summer, at a rate more than double the earlier peak.

In many places restrictions were then put in place, enough to bring the national average down to somewhat above 30,000.

From the beginning of the pandemic Trump has downplayed the seriousness of it, with that one exception in March. He continuously makes fun of wearing masks.

Even though he himself came down with a serious case and had to be hospitalized, he continues to hold large campaign rallies, with people packed together, most not wearing masks. He even uses his illness to play down the seriousness of the pandemic, saying that not to worry if you get it, like him your will recover.

Because he has a large following, and the Republican Party stays on his message, there is a big difference between the 26 Republican controlled states and the 24 Democratic ones in how measures to contain the virus are done or not done in some instances.

This doesn't mean that the Democrats, too, haven't relaxed opening up too much and too soon, they

have, just not as much.

Individuals who believe Trump, and there are tens of millions who are his core followers, also help spread the disease by their cavalier disregard of the proven ways to help contain it, like wearing masks in public places, especially indoors and keeping safe distancing.

This partially explains how the virus has spread geographically. The first peak centered on the Northeast, especially New York. The second in the southern states of the "Sun Belt". This third upsurge has spread to the Midwest and West, including rural areas.

In the latter, small towns are often a hundred miles from the nearest hospital. Hospitals often have only a small number of beds, and are threatened with being overwhelmed.

In almost all states there is an increase in new cases.

The main reason for the continued spread is the nature of this virus itself: it is highly contagious. As long as it exists on one place, no place is immune.

That is true internationally, too.

Throughout the pandemic Trump has refused to come up with a national plan to contain the virus. That leaves it up to the different states, which are financially strapped because of no federal assistance, to come up with their own plans. Some cities are trying to do so also.

What the Trump administration has been doing has now been explicitly explained. On October 25, Mark Meadows, the White House chief of staff, said on CNN, "We are not going to control the pandemic."

That means the virus will continue to spread with no federal check. Trump is now emphasizing this at his campaign rallies. "Not to worry" – it will pass on its own.

The idea is that if we allow the virus to continue to spread so that a great majority get it, we will have "herd immunity."

Whatever that number who have to be infected is, it is well over 50 percent. Let's say it is 70 percent. That means 245 million people in the U.S. If the rate of deaths is one percent, that would mean 2.45 million deaths. That is immoral and unacceptable, worthy of Nazi Dr. Mengele.

Moreover, it is not known how long any immunity from getting the disease lasts. It is not forever for many viruses, like the flu. Flu vaccines make antibodies to the virus like having the disease does, and that lasts only six months. And, like the flu, the corona-19 virus mutates and may become impervious to previous antibodies.

Meadows also said the administration will concentrate on developing a vaccine and treatments. Trump is pressuring companies working on vaccines to come up with one "at warp speed".

"Warp speed" is a term from science fiction imagining travel between stars, which is very difficult because nothing that has mass can ever reach the speed of light. For light to traverse our Milky Way galaxy takes 107,000 years.

So these writers imagine a "warp" in space-time that would allow objects to pass through and come out in a different space and time, getting around the limitation of the speed of light.

While this may be possible in some mathematical way, it has never been observed. Moreover, going through such a “hole” would destroy any object.

To continue the analogy, the danger is that developing a vaccine at “warp speed” – meaning as fast as Trump demands – may also harm the recipient or not be effective or only partly effective because it will mean cutting corners on testing for harmful side effects and effectiveness.

No wonder that many people say they won’t take a vaccine developed on Trump’s timeline. I won’t. I will wait until I am satisfied that truly independent scientists, with peer review, approve it.

If not enough people take a vaccine, it cannot result in herd immunity, even if temporary.

This what we face at least as long as the Trump administration is in power: A new upsurge of cases, then hospitalizations, and deaths without any federal plan to control the virus. The medical system will be overwhelmed.

We can hope that enough state and local governments wake up and take corrective measures resulting in the great majority, 90 percent or so, of citizens doing what we know works to bring down cases – wearing masks and safe distancing, no large gatherings. Or that enough individuals do that on their own.

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