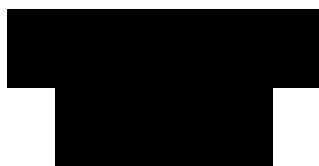


Coronavirus Pandemic: COVID-19

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Abstract

Since December 2019, the world has been at battle with the faceless force, COVID-19. This virus has put many lives in jeopardy and has taken the lives of thousands. In this paper, I will discuss the origins and rapid spread of the coronavirus, along with people who have helped along the way. I have included two figures to aid in explaining this pandemic. There will be no result because this pandemic is still present. All the data used will be a few days old because of this. What we must keep in mind is that everyone is currently going through the same situation.

Coronavirus Pandemic: COVID-19

It has only taken a few months for COVID-19 to become a worldwide pandemic.

Starting in Wuhan, Hubei province, China, COVID-19 has spread rapidly. Many are concerned and scared, and some are not taking the situation seriously enough. As of right now, on April 6, 2020, at 10:20 a.m., there are 1,363,261 confirmed cases worldwide (Schiffmann, 2019). The world is in lockdown, and everyone is working to decrease the spread of COVID-19.

On December 31, 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) in China was notified of an unknown case of pneumonia detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China. A total of 44 case-patients were recorded from December 31, 2019, to January 3, 2020. The outbreak is associated with the exposure of one seafood market in Wuhan City. The new type of coronavirus was identified and isolated on January 7, 2020. On January 12, 2020, China shared a genetic sequence with other countries in order to develop diagnosis kits. By January 20, 2020, there have been 282 confirmed cases of COVID-19 from four countries: China, Thailand, Japan, and the Republic of Korea (WHO, 2020a). The number of cases has continued to expand, encompassing every country.

When the virus was still in its early stages, Dr. Li Wenliang, an ophthalmologist in Wuhan, tried to tell other doctors to be cautious. Because of this, the local police called him in. The police accused him of “making false comments” that had “severely disturbed the social order” (Gewirtz, 2020). Dr. Li Wenliang was being investigated along with several other doctors for “spreading rumors” (Gewirtz, 2020). Although, at this point, the virus became too widespread to hide. The police apologized, but it was too late. Dr. Li Wenliang died on February 7, 2020, from the very disease he’d tried to warn people about.

As more cases continue to pop up, people are starting to panic and rush to grocery stores to stock up on supplies. People are grabbing everything, from canned food and cleaning supplies to milk and eggs, which will expire in a few weeks. The one thing that everyone seems to be physically fighting over is toilet paper. It has been seen on news channels, talked about on late night shows, and even on social media. It has gotten so bad that students in London created a website called howmuchtoiletpaper.com. Ben Sassoon, a software developer, and Sam Harris, an artist, created this website after they discussed how much toilet paper they each used on a daily basis and how it was going to change during the pandemic. “It has now been used by over 5,000,000 people and is helping to reduce toilet paper shortage round the world” (Sassoon & Harris, 2020). The way to use the website would be to move a slider left or right to the number of “Rolls you have,” and another slider for “Toilet visits per day” per person. If someone, living alone, has 33 rolls of toilet paper and goes to the bathroom five times per day, their supply would last them 106 days, or 757% of their quarantine. It is a little sad to think that students have to create a website like this because people are hoarding supplies; but, it also shows how creative and resilient young people can be.

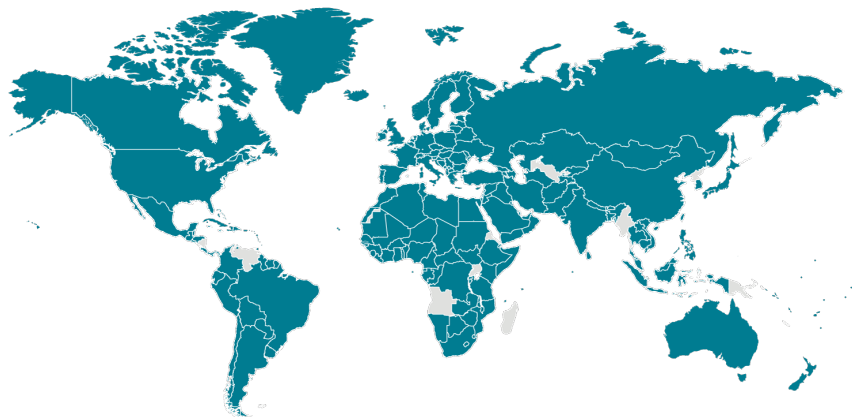
There are a lot of sites people can go to for information on the COVID-19 pandemic. They might not all have the same information. This is where Avi Schiffmann comes in. Avi is a seventeen-year-old high schooler in Washington State. His reasoning behind creating the site was simple, “I wanted to just make the data easily accessible” (Crane, 2020). Here, people can find information that Avi has pulled from BNO News, CDC, and WHO. He continuously updates the information. The statistics are broken into thirteen sections: world, USA, Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, China, Canada, Australia, Oceania, South America, North America,

and Middle East COVID-19 Stats. As of now, April 2, 2020, 10:26 a.m., there are 1,056,371 total confirmed cases, 55,785 deaths, 34,214 serious cases, 213,637 total recovered, and 192 of 195 countries infected (Schiffmann, 2019). This student has been able to keep the world up to date on everything that is going on in real-time.

According to the World Health Organization, the United States had its first case of COVID-19 January 22, 2020, (WHO, 2020b). As of January 31, 2020, the United States had six cases, and Italy had its first two cases diagnosed the same day (WHO, 2020c). While the cases in the United States have continued to climb, Italy has had the highest death rate. Currently, Italy has 13,974 deaths, while the United States has 6,558 (Schiffmann, 2019). Figure 1 below shows every country that has been infected (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020b).

Figure 1

Global Map



Note. This figure was taken directly from the CDC on April 3, 2020, at 12:00 p.m. ET, and may have changed since such time.

A handful of countries are still untouched by the pandemic, but sadly, this will most likely not last. Many of the infected countries have enacted some kind of quarantine or nationwide

lockdown to stop the spread. South Africa has imposed a 21-day lockdown. New Zealand enacted a mandatory 14-day quarantine for individuals entering the country and went on full lockdown March 25. Saudi Arabia locked down its capital, two holy cities, and the city of Jeddah. Colombia began a nationwide quarantine on March 24 and went as far as to say that people over 70 are to remain indoors until May. The largest and longest quarantine came from China, with the nation locking down at least sixteen cities at the end of January. In Jordan, people caught leaving their homes will face up to a year in prison. (Kaplan, 2020)

When cases first started to show in the United States, the government did not take it seriously enough, this resulted in more cases to pop up. Different parts of the country are experiencing different levels of COVID-19 activity. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the worst-hit states are California, New York, New Jersey, and Michigan (CDC, 2020a). On March 15, the government implemented a program called “15 Days to Slow the Spread” in which the nation would slow down the spread of COVID-19 through social distancing at all levels of society (CDC, 2020e). At first, President Trump wanted people to go back to daily life by Easter, but a lot of people, especially healthcare workers, think that was too soon. On March 29, he extended the social distancing order through the end of April. Individual states have their own social distancing orders in effect at the moment. On April 1, Florida and Pennsylvania issued statewide orders requiring its’ citizens to stay inside in order to clamp the spread of the coronavirus.

On March 19, Dr. John Hellerstedt, commissioner of Texas Department of State Health Services, declared a public health disaster in Texas. His reason being that COVID-19 has become a serious threat, posing a "high risk of death to a large number of people, and creates a

substantial risk of public exposure” (Texas Department of State Health Services, 2020). On March 26, Texas’s Governor, Greg Abbot, issued a self-quarantine edict requiring people traveling from New York City and New Orleans to self-quarantine for 14 days after they arrive. All non-essential businesses are closed in order to flatten the curve of the pandemic. Cinemas, malls, bars, clubs, concert halls, gyms, and sporting arenas have all closed. The only stores staying open are grocery stores and a few restaurants doing drive-thru or to-go orders only. Some restaurants have even removed the tables and chairs in the hopes of deterring any customers from coming inside.

So many people are out of a job because of this pandemic. The professions that are not needed during this time are stuck at home without a job. The United States unemployment rate was at 4.4% in March 2020 (Cave, 2020). This is the highest one-month unemployment increase since January 1975, during the Great Depression. Some companies have started to use their factories to make supplies for healthcare professions. Breweries and perfume companies turned their factories into hand sanitizer dispensaries. The Patriots used their private team plane to pick up thousands of masks from China and deliver them to New York healthcare workers. 3D printers and sportswear brands Nike and Bauer are manufacturing face shields (George-Parkin, 2020). Car companies, like General Motors, are using their factories to build ventilators. Fashion and apparel companies are using their sewing machines to create face masks and medical gowns (George-Parkin, 2020). While some people still have jobs that get them out of the house, but also puts them at great risk, there are also some people who are not taking the stay-at-home orders to well.

Some people are alone in their self-isolation and only have the internet to turn to for a connection. Other people might have a pet or two, but after tigers at a zoo were diagnosed with COVID-19, people diagnosed with the disease have been told to isolate themselves from everyone and everything. The CDC says that things people can do to take care of themselves are “Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media” (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020d). Even though people are isolated doesn’t mean they can’t keep taking care of their body. Take a minute each day to stretch or meditate. Try to eat healthy, exercise, and get plenty of sleep. Learn a new skill or hone a skill you already have. Stick to your daily routine if possible, or create a new one. Most of all, connect with others, whether that means texting someone, calling them, or FaceTiming.

People are comparing COVID-19 to two other historical coronavirus pandemics: SARS in 2003, and MERS in 2012; “but, those had a fraction of the cases we are dealing with now” (NBC, 2020). In the 1300s, the Bubonic Plague started in fleas then jumps from rodents to humans. It killed between 25 and 50 million people from the sixth to the eighth century. The same strain caused the Black Death (1347-1351), taking the lives of 25 million people. These diseases were caused by fleas and rodents, but other pandemics have spread through “human to human contact” (NBC, 2020). Smallpox, “One of the deadliest diseases in history” (NBC, 2020), sprouted up around the globe but was extremely deadly in the 16th century. Europeans traveled to the Americas to colonize and brought Smallpox with them, “killing up to 90% of Native Americans” (NBC, 2020). When COVID-19 was just starting to spread, it was being compared to the 1918 Influenza epidemic. It was considered “the deadliest flu season we know of, infecting about one-third of the world’s population” (Ries, 2020). The last deadly pandemic,

Ebola (2014-2016), killed 50% of the people who got sick. The difference between Ebola and COVID-19 is how it spreads. Ebola “is predominantly spread through bodily fluids” (Ries, 2020) like blood, which makes people less likely to catching Ebola, unlike COVID-19.

The way in which COVID-19 spreads is through person-to-person contact. This is why healthcare officials are urging people to stay six feet apart because if an infected person coughs or sneezes, they can potentially infect someone else. To protect others and yourself, the CDC states that people should wash their hands often with soap and warm water for at least twenty-seconds, roughly the same amount of time as singing *Happy Birthday* twice. People should also avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth with “unwashed hands” (CDC, 2020c), and practice social distancing when they can help it. To protect others, people are encouraged to stay home if they are sick, cover sneezes and coughs, wear a face mask if they are sick, and clean and disinfect regularly touched surfaces and objects (CDC, 2020c).

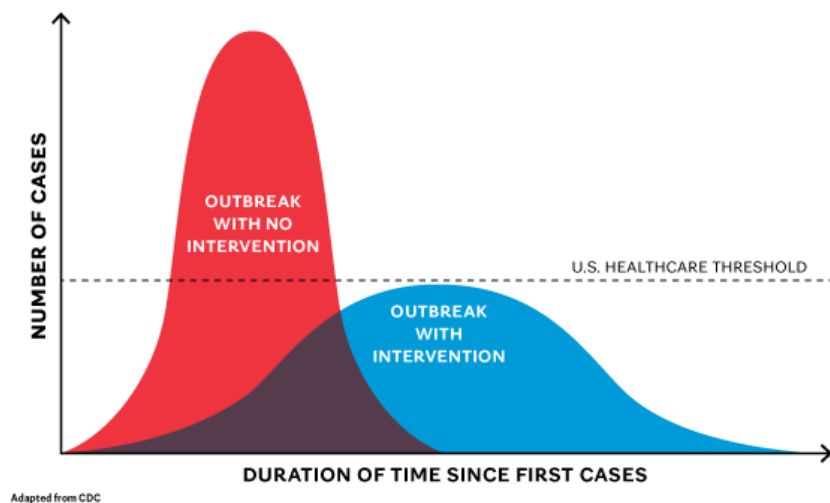
Symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to those of the flu, so spotting the difference is a challenge. Fever, dry cough, and tiredness are the beginning signs that someone might have COVID-19. According to the World Health Organization, the “incubation period” ranges from 1-14 days after exposure (WHO, 2020d). Others may have “aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or diarrhea. These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually” (WHO, 2020d). One out of six people who get COVID-19 become seriously ill. In the beginning, it was reported that older people and very young children were the most at risk. This is because the immune system is too weak, and those with underlying medical problems like “high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, cancer or diabetes” are more likely to catch the virus (WHO, 2020d). Recently doctors and nurses have been seeing people of all ages

coming in with symptoms matching that of COVID-19. Young adults and teens have not taken this pandemic seriously enough, they still go out and put themselves and others at risk.

Staying inside, washing your hands, and social distancing are of the utmost importance. Scientists are still working on a cure, and any possible vaccines are under investigation (WHO, 2020d). There are people who have tried methods to use themselves and become seriously ill because of it. The best thing anyone can do is to continue to wash their hands and limit social interactions. Taking these precautions will help flatten the curve. Figure 2 is an example of what the curve looks like in its two different scenarios (O'Hara, "Flatten the Curve," 2020).

Figure 2

Flatten the Curve



Flattening the curve means exactly what it looks like above, slowing down the progression of the virus, so fewer people need treatment at any given time. This figure shows what would happen if the curve is flattened and what would happen if it is not. The red curve is the worst-case scenario. That is what would happen if countries do not take initiative. The cases would continue to rise to monumental numbers. Even though the outbreak would be over quicker, so

many more people would die in the process. The blue curve is what countries are working toward by telling citizens to stay inside. Wuhan, China did just that when more and more people started to get infected, and this helped stop the spread of the virus. The number of cases decreased in China, and the government decided to open up the trains and let people go back to work. That was a mistake. Recently China has seen a new spike in cases. They are trying to find a balance between social distancing and continued testing.

On April 8, 2020, at 9:00 a.m., there are 1,452,405 COVID-19 cases worldwide and 83,542 dead (Schiffmann, 2019). This pandemic will not stop anytime soon. People have to continue to be cautious and stay safe. Everyone is in this together, experiencing the same thing. New information is constantly being brought to light, and statistics are being updated. The best thing anyone can do at this time is to stay connected with each other while social distancing. On April 8, 2020, at 9:00 a.m., there are 323,694 recovered people in the world (Schiffmann, 2019). It is not impossible. It is not unrealistic.

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