

Congressional doctor expects up to 150 million Americans to contract the coronavirus

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Behind closed doors, Dr. Brian Monahan, the attending physician of the US Congress and Supreme Court, informed the senate staff that he expects a staggering 70 to 150 million people in the United States to become infected with COVID-19, according to NBC.

In Europe, German Chancellor Angela Merkel has stated a similar figure, that up to 70 percent of Germany, some 58 million people, could become infected.

The report from NBC came amidst data showing a sharp increase in total cases worldwide to at least 126,000 and more than 4,600 deaths—a 50 percent increase in new cases internationally, compared to a 30 percent increase the previous day. The number of cases outside of China has increased 13-fold in the past two weeks to more than 40,000, and the number of countries where infection has been reported has tripled.

At the current rate, there will be a million cases outside of China by the end of this month and one million cases in the United States alone sometime during the second week of April.

Monahan's comments were made public just hours after the World Health Organization (WHO) formally declared the coronavirus outbreak a pandemic and cited "alarming levels of inaction" by governments to prevent the spread. At the same time, WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned that it wasn't just some countries lacked "capacity" or "resources" but that "[s]ome countries are struggling with a lack of resolve."

This was seen most clearly during US President Trump's prime time presidential address last night. During his remarks, Trump, visibly rattled, announced no new measures to fight the expanding health crisis. He instead invoked a reactionary ban on all travel from Europe for 30 days, excluding the United Kingdom, as

well as using emergency powers to provide economic relief to small businesses and large corporations.

In a comment directly contradicting Monahan, Trump reasserted his lie that for "the vast majority of Americans, the risk is very, very low." At the same time, the conflicting stances between the claims of the president and the admission by a top US official that nearly half the country might fall victim to the pandemic highlights the paralysis of the Trump administration and the entire political establishment in the face of the most perilous public health crisis since the Spanish flu in 1918.

In what presumably was an attempt to provide a silver lining to the congressional staffers, Monahan reportedly touted that 80 percent of those who contract the virus will recover. While there are so far no reports indicating what he thinks will happen to the other 20 percent of COVID-19 patients, the virus' progression through China and internationally gives some indication.

At the height of the epidemic in Wuhan, during which the health care system essentially collapsed in the face of several thousand cases, the mortality rate sharply spiked. In the US, a similar progression, if aggressive containment measures are not instituted, will result in millions dead.

The chief cause of the spike in Wuhan was not the virus itself, but the lack of available medical equipment and personnel to provide care for critically sick patients. Data collected since January indicates that somewhere between 15 and 20 percent of coronavirus patients suffer from severe respiratory problems that require an intensive care unit, oxygen or both, in order to give their own body's immune system time to fight off the disease.

As hospitals in Wuhan were flooded with those ill or

worried that they were ill, it became virtually impossible for those with a severe case of COVID-19 to receive the necessary medical assistance to survive. They ultimately suffocated, gasping for breath as their airways steadily closed.

At the same time, as has been seen in China as well as in South Korea, Singapore and Hong Kong, strict testing, monitoring and quarantine measures can effectively halt the spread of the virus. In China, the epicenter of the virus, the number of new cases has continued to be under 100 for several days. In South Korea, the total mortality rate is less than one percent, despite having to deal with almost 8,000 total cases.

Without immediate and far-reaching measures to curb the spread of the infection, the United States will face a catastrophic scenario.

Even if the quarantine measures implemented in China were imposed on the US population today, the number of infected would likely rise to between 150,000 and 200,000 by early April. Upwards of 30,000 will require serious medical intervention in order to live. There are not enough hospital beds in the country to provide life-saving care for such a number of critical cases, much less the millions predicted by Monahan.

While the United States was not explicitly named, the total inability of the US health care system to meet the demands of the coronavirus were spelled out near the end of yesterday's WHO briefing.

Executive Director Dr. Michael Ryan stated: "Some countries clearly, and you've seen this through the infection of health workers, have not yet got in place necessary measures to stop infections transmitting. Our hospital systems are designed to deliver at 99 percent efficiency. They don't have any space to deliver more."

This is most true in the United States, where decades of for-profit health care has resulted in the provision of the bare minimum of empty hospital beds, as well as forcing doctors, nurses and other medical professionals to work longer and longer shifts.

The indifference towards the lives of the American and international population expressed by Trump, Merkel and every representative of the world's ruling elites is not incompetence, but political criminality. Like every major crisis, the financial aristocracy sees this as an opportunity to eliminate the "surplus

population" and absorb billions of social security, Medicare, Medicaid and pension funds into their pockets.



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