

Coronavirus cases in United States surpass 100,000

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28 March 2020

The number of officially confirmed coronavirus cases in the United States is now greater than 102,000, while the number of deaths caused by COVID-19 has surpassed 1,600. This includes more than 16,500 new cases yesterday, the most anywhere in the world, along with nearly 300 new deaths. The country alone now accounts for more than one-sixth of all coronavirus cases internationally.

The number of cases continues to increase exponentially in the United States. It has taken only four days for the number of known cases and deaths to double, a rate currently faster than the worldwide spread of the virus. The number of cases internationally has reached nearly 600,000 and the death toll now exceeds 27,000, numbers which double every six days. Virtually every country has now reported at least one case of the disease.

Even these numbers are an underestimate of the true magnitude of the pandemic. A recent study done on the coronavirus outbreak onboard the Diamond Princess cruise ship points to the fact that between one in six and one in five cases of COVID-19 are infectious but do not present any symptoms, meaning that a person can easily and unknowingly spread the disease.

These and other medical reports are why the World Health Organization has stressed the need to “test, test, test” for the coronavirus, as well as trace the contacts of those with a confirmed case. While aggressive measures have been taken in places like China, South Korea, Singapore and Japan, it took the Trump administration nearly two months from when the first coronavirus case was detected in the US to implement mass testing.

As a result, the caseload in the United States has spiraled out of control and the hospital systems in the most affected regions face imminent collapse. In New

York City, which has more than 25,000 cases and is the national epicenter of the disease, hospitals are rapidly reaching their capacity to treat the most critical patients. Even there, the city government explicitly states that “Unless you are hospitalized and a diagnosis will impact your care, you will not be tested.” In other words, because the rate of hospitalization is still relatively low, if true testing and contact tracing was done in the city and across the country, it would likely increase the number of known cases of COVID-19 by a factor of ten.

There is also growing evidence that both the case numbers and death tolls are being manipulated. An article in *Gizmodo* has reported that a teenager who tested positive for the coronavirus and recently died is not being counted in the official death toll because the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ruled his cause of death as septic shock. Sepsis is not a disease, but a potentially fatal overreaction by the body’s immune system to an infection, such as COVID-19. Further investigation is needed to determine how many similar cases exist in the US and internationally.

In an attempt to get some measure of control over the socially explosive situation in the country’s largest city, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo has asked the federal government for 30,000 ventilators, necessary equipment to keep the most critical patients alive as the infection spreads to their lungs. Cuomo’s request comes in the wake of the increasing evidence that COVID-19, in sharp contrast to the seasonal flu, can require weeks or months of ventilator support to properly recover.

In response, President Donald Trump callously remarked, “I don’t believe you need 40,000 or 30,000 ventilators.” He then questioned the severity of the pandemic, stating, “You know, you’re going to major

hospitals sometimes, they'll have two ventilators. And now, all of a sudden, they're saying, can we order 30,000 ventilators?"

Trump's criminal and malicious comments ignore the vast experience of the virus in China, as well as the ongoing struggles of doctors in Italy, Spain and Iran, which all currently have at least five times more deaths per capita than the United States and far more deaths total. In those three countries, the most important resource for keeping critical patients alive is ventilators. The shortage of ventilators in Italy has become so dire that doctors are now being forced to tragically decide who receives their aid and who does not. Without any new equipment, New York will soon face the same situation.

Conditions in Detroit are also rapidly approaching a point of no return. The Henry Ford Health System has warned, as a result of a surge of COVID-19 cases in the metro area, that patients "extremely sick" may be "ineligible for ICU or ventilator care." People are also being told to inform the hospital when they are admitted whether or not they have a "do not resuscitate" order, and that those "who have the best of getting better are our first priority."

The accelerating spread of the coronavirus has also forced 25 US states, 74 counties, 14 cities and one Native American territory to issue some form of stay at home order, affecting at least 228 million people nationally. All nonessential businesses in these areas have been closed and people are permitted to leave their homes only to get groceries, visit doctors and carry out other activities deemed "necessary" by those governments. All large gatherings are banned.

This process is also occurring at the international level. Every country on the planet has some form of travel restriction in place as a result of the pandemic, and much of the European population has also been ordered to stay home. At the same time, governments are using the opportunity to further militarize their borders, such as the plan by the US to deploy 1,000 troops to the US-Canadian border and further increase the military presence at the US-Mexican border.

These measures have been sharply criticized by the World Health Organization for being both insufficient to stop the virus and detrimental to the needed international collaboration. Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned Wednesday that

while isolation can "suppress and stop transmission," the virus will likely "resurge" in the aftermath if nothing else is done.



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