

# The CDC retracts its guidance that stipulated the airborne danger of the coronavirus

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23 September 2020

On Friday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published new guidelines acknowledging that the virus causing COVID-19 is primarily transmitted through small airborne particles. This admission implies that people occupying poorly ventilated areas such as classrooms, meat packing factories, production lines, churches, grocery stores, etc., are at risk of acquiring COVID-19 if someone else in the room with COVID-19 is contagious. Airborne particles, unlike respiratory droplets, can linger in the air and concentrate throughout an enclosed room.

The CDC wrote in no uncertain terms that the most common modes of transmission for SARS-CoV-2 were through “respiratory droplets or small particles, such as those in aerosols, produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, sings, talks, or breathes. These particles can be inhaled into the nose, mouth, airways, and lungs and cause infection. This is thought to be the main way the virus spreads.” They also added that these airborne particles could travel beyond the six feet limit that has been the officially stated social distancing yardstick.

However, by Monday afternoon, the guidelines had disappeared off their pages, reverting to their previous position that the virus is spread mainly from person-to-person in close contact. There is no longer a mention of “airborne” or “aerosol.” Only a comment stating that “a draft version of proposed changes to these recommendations was posted in error to the agency’s official website” indicates that a retraction occurred.

Given the recent controversies surrounding the CDC, the exposure by Politico over the administration’s manipulation of the weekly reports, essentially being taken hostage by the Trump administration and the political establishment to censor the scientific data, it is apparent that the national public health institution is being used to provide a cover for the ruling class policy of herd immunity. The small window provided by this slip underscores the deeply criminal intentions that are at play.

Clearly, a statement that indicates the airborne nature of the SARS-CoV-2 virus brings into stark relief that the opening of schools is a dangerous initiative, one rooted in ensuring the factories and production lines are operating at breakneck capacity, and every productive hand is gainfully employed

unadulterated by the needs of their children or families. From the perspective of the ruling class, schools are not primarily a place of education, but temporary safe holding locations for children and adolescents while their parents are laboring at work.

Children and young people infected with COVID-19 fair better than older adults, but they are not impervious to the dangers of the virus. There have been well-documented cases of infants, toddlers, teenagers and young adults succumbing to the infection and suffering from the morbidity it causes. They are also quite efficient at transmitting the virus, especially as asymptomatic carriers. By all accounts, school reopenings and children are a key element in the policy of herd immunity that is being embraced openly by every political spectrum of the capitalist class.

Behind this policy is the need to effectively cull the most unproductive sector of the population—the retired and enfeebled who are a drain on the surplus value that is generated by the working class. If it happens to kill a few thousand children or hundreds of thousands of adults in the prime of their lives, the surplus population will quickly fill in these gaps.

The globe has, in a few short months, reached close to 1 million deaths, of which 200,000 have occurred in the United States, a byproduct of the criminal policies implemented by political parties at every level of the state. More than 60,000 of these deaths occurred in people under the age of 65. Yet, these deaths are glossed over as attention is directed to the nomination of the vacant Supreme Court seat, the upcoming elections, the state of the economy, or Russian and Chinese intrigue.

By all accounts, a significant majority of these deaths have occurred in the working class, as studies have shown that poverty has been a driver of the infection. As usual, Trump states most directly what the ruling class thinks of the working class, when he says that COVID-19 “affects virtually nobody.”

The data behind the aerosolization of the virus are numerous and have come from various sectors. A study of a video in a restaurant in China unequivocally demonstrated that an air conditioner was able to push virus-laden air infecting others who were seated more than six feet from an infected individual. A case study from Washington state found that one person

infected 52 individuals. In South Korea, a single cluster of 346 confirmed cases occurred in February at a Shincheonji Church in Daegu, mostly attributed to just one person.

An NIH study published in May using highly sensitive laser light as a detector demonstrated that loud speech could emit thousands of oral fluid droplets each second that lasted eight to 14 minutes before disappearing from “the window of view.” A more recent study from the University of Florida confirmed viable virus particles isolated from respiratory droplets collected from SARS-CoV-2-infected patients up to 16 feet away.

The World Health Organization (WHO) updated its guidance in July after several hundred concerned scientists advised the international health agency to acknowledge the growing evidence that airborne transmission of the coronavirus can be a health hazard in indoor spaces.

The modified statement says, in effect, “short-range aerosol transmission, particularly in specific indoor locations, such as crowded and inadequately ventilated spaces over a prolonged period of time with infected persons cannot be ruled out.” However, the WHO has not entirely endorsed aerosol transmission as a primary route of infection, adding in their most recent press brief on a question about the CDC guidance change, “we still, based on the evidence, believe that there is a wide range of transmission modes.” However, as an agency of the United Nations, despite the sincerity on the part of their scientists, they are bound by the political noose that conditions their criticisms of the US and EU.

Among the signatories that wrote to the WHO in July have been Dr. Jose-Luis Jimenez, a professor of atmospheric chemistry at the University of Colorado, and Lidia Morawska, an engineer and the director of the International Laboratory for Air Quality and Health at the Queensland University of Technology, who have been vocal in asserting that the framework used by epidemiologists, such as at the WHO, is based on older science from the 1930s that no longer withstands the recent evidence on the physics of droplets.

Lydia Bourouiba, an MIT researcher who studies the spectrum of droplet sizes, explained to Vox, “We’re always exhaling, in fact, a gas cloud that contains within it a continuum spectrum of droplet sizes. The cloud mixture, not the drop sizes, determines the initial range of the drops and their fate in indoor environments.” According to her study published in JAMA in March, the factors that determine how long the respiratory droplets linger in the air is based on the speed of the cloud, the temperature and humidity of the environment, and the individual droplet makeup of each cloud.

It is worth considering that Chinese researchers in a preprint study titled “Indoor transmission of SARS-CoV-2” found that more than 7,300 cases were driven by 318 outbreaks, of which only one occurred outdoors. Empirical evidence of recent mass protests has confirmed that outdoor transmissions are rare, which points to the concerns being raised by health agencies on

the arrival of cold weather in the Northern Hemisphere and crowding of the population indoors which will reignite the transmission of the pandemic.

The University of Colorado has called for classroom capacities not to exceed 20 to 30 percent of previous capacity. Fewer bodies also mean fewer aerosols and less work for the HVAC systems and viral countermeasures. Additionally, they further recommend running ventilation systems 24/7 and upgrading filters to MERV13, which was shown in a 2013 study to capture more virus-carrying particles. They also recommend portable air cleaners with HEPA filters matched to the size of the space involved.

However, a US Government Accountability Office (GAO) report from June noted that 54 percent of public school districts need to update or replace multiple building systems or features in their schools. About 36,000 schools nationwide need HVAC updates. Yet, according to a GAO survey of the 50 states and District of Columbia, most states do not conduct statewide assessments to determine school facilities’ needs and instead leave this task to the underfunded school districts. The need to renovate and retrofit public schools is an acute social need, but it is doubtful if funding for such a measure will see the light of day.

Ken Cook, president and co-founder of the Environmental Working Group, has recently called for the resignation of Dr. Robert Redfield, the head of the CDC, for his politicization of the institution and acquiescing to pressures. “The whole point of the CDC is to stand firmly on science—and science alone—when rogue waves of political and economic expediency threaten to wash away concern for public health ... never before has a CDC leader dragged the agency through such a series of manifestly deadly misstatements of science, willful communications blunders and life-threatening guidance flip-flops, all at the behest of political leaders whose publicly avowed goal is to minimize the mortal danger the novel coronavirus poses to American people.”

This statement is accurate to a point. Behind Redfield’s blunder and the political establishment’s deadly intent are the demands imposed by capitalism to ensure the markets are fully operational regardless of the inherent risk to the population. However, paraphrasing Marx, science owns us and should guide socially necessary work accordingly.

What will be critical is the character of the political leadership that must unite the struggles of all workers as a cohesive instrument to defend the population against the slaughter being planned by the capitalists.



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