THE CURRENT EPIDEMIC WILL SOON BE OVER – WILL THE CURRENT MEDIA SCARE?

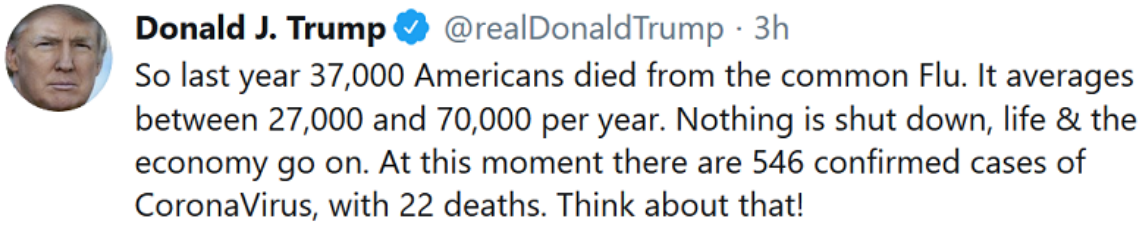
Nations are closing borders, stocks are plummeting and a New York Times headline reads: “The Coronavirus Has Put the World’s Economy in Survival Mode.”

Both political parties have realized the crisis could severely impact the November elections — House, Senate, Presidency.

And sacré bleu, they’ve even shuttered the Louvre!

Some of these reactions are understandable, but much of it pure hysteria. Meanwhile, the spread of the virus continues to slow.

More than 18,000 Americans have died from this current season’s generic flu so far, according to the latest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 2018, the CDC estimated, there were 80,000 flu deaths. That’s against 22 coronavirus deaths so far, from about 546 cases.



Worldwide, there have been about 3,400 coronavirus deaths, out of about 106,000 identified cases. Flu, by comparison, grimly reaps about 291,000 to 646,000 annually.

China is the origin of the virus and still accounts for over 80 percent of cases and deaths. But its cases peaked and began declining more than a month ago, according to data presented by the Canadian epidemiologist who spearheaded the World Health Organization's coronavirus mission to China.

Fewer than 200 new cases are reported daily, down from a peak of 4,000.

Subsequent countries will follow this same pattern, in what's called *Farr's Law of Epidemics*. First formulated in 1852 by British medical statistician Dr. William Farr and ignored in every epidemic hysteria since, the law states that epidemics tend to rise and fall in a roughly symmetrical pattern or bell-shaped curve.

AIDS, SARS, Ebola — they all followed that pattern. So does seasonal flu each year.

Clearly, *seasonal flu is vastly more contagious than the new coronavirus*, as the WHO has noted. Consider that the first known coronavirus cases date back to early December, and since then, the virus has afflicted fewer people in total than flu does in a few days.

Oh, and why are there no flu quarantines? Because it's so contagious, it would be impossible.

As for death rates, *you can't employ simple math* — as everyone is doing — and look at deaths versus cases because those are *reported* cases. With both flu and assuredly with coronavirus, the great majority of those infected go *unreported.* They have symptoms so mild — if any — that they don't seek medical attention and don't get counted in the caseload.

Furthermore, those calculating rates ignore the importance of good health care. Given that the vast majority of cases have occurred in a country with poor health care (like China), that's going to dramatically exaggerate the death rate. You'd be surprised at how many potentially deadly diseases (malaria, TB) Americans get that wreak havoc in much of the world but kill essentially none of us.

The rate also varies tremendously according to age, with a Chinese government analysis showing 0.2 percent deaths below age 40 but 14.8 percent above 80. A study published last month in the Journal of the American Medical Association found zero deaths worldwide among children 9 and under. Zero.

Like the flu, the coronavirus is afflicting high-risk groups: the elderly, those with underlying health conditions like diabetes or heart disease and those with compromised immune systems. Are there exceptions? Sure. But that's the case with almost every complex biological phenomenon of the

kind.

More good news. This month, the Northern Hemisphere, which includes the countries with the most cases, starts heating up. *Almost all respiratory viruses hate warm and moist weather*. That's why flu dies out in America every year by next month (April -- May at the latest).

The Philippines, where I currently am, has about a third of the US population, but it's so damned hot and humid here, so far we have had no confirmed cases of internal transmission. Heat and humidity are why there are no deaths among India's 1.3 billion, Indonesia's 267 million, nor the 1.0 billion people of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Still, if you want to try to reduce your low risk even further, then use what works against flu and colds. Both the surgeon general and head of the CDC have advised we nix the masks; they don't work. Instead, wash your hands with hot water and soap or an alcohol solution for at least 10 to 20 seconds.

That way you won't spread any germs when you use the TV remote to flip off the latest hysterical news report.

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