

# Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic 2020

On March 11<sup>th</sup> 2020 the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared Covid-19 (Coronavirus) a world Pandemic. The virus originated in China and soon began to spread to Europe and the rest of the world. Covid-19 has no known cure or treatment. Scientists are scrambling to understand the virus and are frantically searching for a vaccine or cure. China was overwhelmed. Wuhan, where the virus reared its ugly head lost many and locked the region down. China warned the world on January 3<sup>rd</sup> that the virus was extremely infectious and spreading like wildfire, only to be ignored, and leaving much of the world unprepared and reactive instead of proactive. It soon became apparent that the virus was spreading so rapidly, isolating the population from human contact seemed the only viable solution to prevent an uncontrollable catastrophe. Not knowing who was infected and who was not, without testing, made the task of preventing the spread of the deadly disease virtually impossible. The virus spread throughout Europe and attacked North America. Trump refused to accept the only proven solution, to minimise the spread of the virus. Furthermore Trump called the whole situation a hoax and nothing more than an attempt to discredit his leadership. Trump went out of his way to prevent any response, from blocking testing, to refusing to acquire necessary medical equipment, to protect first responders, to protecting the general public. Trump ignored the professional medical, scientific advice to take early action to prevent the spread of the virus; replacing professionals with Pence to head the Pandemic Taskforce. Not until mid to late March did the US take serious, although inadequate action, to protect the nation or fight the invasive virus. All national emergencies are responded to by the federal government but Trump not only refused to step up but blocked States from taking action to fight the invasive, rapidly spreading virus. The US became the hotbed of the virus in short order, killing many and spreading rapidly. The nation having wasted nearly two months to take appropriate action, was totally unprepared in both procedures and equipment to prevent devastation. The story is still unfolding and time will tell how it manifests itself.

I am hoping that Winston Churchill was right when he was quoted as saying:

***“You can always count on the Americans to do the right thing after they have exhausted all other possibilities.”***

There seems to be little evidence that Trump is willing to take appropriate action to minimise this devastation, on the contrary, but we can remain hopeful.

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My humble opinion may prove to be valid in the long run, even though it is not universally accepted at this time although the scientific community seems to be on the same page. The primary and immediate need is to develop a testing system that is both reliable and cost effective but above all it must be immediately available and results must be available in a reasonable time. Ideally an inexpensive universally available home test kit that produces results immediately would be fantastic but perhaps too much to ask for. First responders must be tested but they must have adequate protection before being exposed to the infection. Asymptomatic carriers spread the virus for as long as two weeks before becoming aware that they are a source of the problem. Without testing a single case in highly populated areas can turn into a million cases before being discovered. Without massive testing we are merely guessing at the magnitude of the problem. Without knowing who is infected we must assume everyone is a potential source of infection. Isolating only the infected will allow the rest of the world to continue functioning instead of everyone being in lockdown mode. Testing everyone may seem overkill but it seems like the only way of assessing the magnitude of the problem. It goes without saying that you make sure you have all the equipment to treat the ill and have it available where it's needed. Treat the problem as if your life depended on it; many lives do depend on appropriate action. Restarting the economy needs assurance that returning to work is safe and you are returning to an environment where your contacts are tested and proven to be safe to work with. All this takes commitment and funding but in the long run it is more economical than the current shutdown with no knowledge of who is safe and who is a carrier of the problem. A shutdown hurts everyone, some far more severely than others. Developing a cure is time consuming and we can't wait till we have developed a solution before restoring the economy. Testing, testing and more testing is the immediate solution to restoring normalcy to the world.