

Coronavirus

I have been asked to share some thoughts on the Coronavirus. Like many of you, when I first heard about the Coronavirus outbreak in China I questioned the concern as Influenza is known to kill over 30,000 people in the United States annually. I would have to say that my tone has changed as the impact of this virus has been felt around the world and I have seen how this virus has overwhelmed health systems leading them to necessarily ration care. The Coronavirus does not make Influenza less significant but when considering the toll on medical resources, we have to remember that Influenza did not suddenly go away when the Coronavirus showed up.

As we have all heard over and over, Coronavirus is a mild illness for about 80% of those infected, and possibly even more as many of those who have mild symptoms are not likely ever confirmed to have the virus and thus not counted in the statistics. This however, still leaves a significant number of patients who will possibly require hospitalization or even high level ICU care. If we get a sudden surge of such patients our hospitals and ICUs could be overwhelmed.

I am thus strongly advocating that as a community we adhere to the social distancing guidelines that we have been given. What does this mean? Stay home when possible. Before leaving home ask yourself, is this necessary and can this be done in a way that reduces my contact with others (ex. work from home). If you do have to leave home try to distance yourself from others (we have been told at least 6 feet). We should also wash or sanitize our hands regularly and cough or sneeze into our arm. It seems to be accepted by many experts that there is likely some asymptomatic spread of the virus, which increases the importance for all of us to participate in social distancing, whether young or old, healthy or ill.

I urge those who are elderly or who have underlying health conditions to take deliberate action to protect themselves. Stay home except for doing those things that are absolutely necessary. Have someone pick up your meds and groceries if possible and avoid having visitors come into your homes.

Do not be alarmed over the next few days and weeks as we seen the number of cases rapidly increase. A lot of these individuals are already at home recovering in self quarantine as they have been told that they likely have the virus and are just now getting their results back.

In closing I would just like to reiterate steps that we can take to protect ourselves and make a few suggestions to help us get through this. I urge you to take social distancing recommendations seriously. Stay home and away from others whenever possible. Parents, take time to explain to your children why we are taking the steps that we are taking, reassuring them regularly as they are also confused and concerned. Take time every day to step away from Coronavirus. Stop reading about the latest statistic or watching the next breaking news story about the rising death toll for a while. Go play a game or watch a movie. Go out in the yard and run around. All of us should get out and get some fresh air on a regular basis. It is okay to go sit on your porch. We are fortunate to live in an area where we have a lot of wide open spaces allowing us to go for a drive and stop and walk around in the country for a while. I believe that these steps will help alleviate some Coronavirus associated anxiety and depression. Finally, as a community lets band together, calling or texting our family, neighbors, and friends regularly to check in and to offer support to one another.

It is an honor to be apart of such a great community and together we will get through this.