

The Absurdity of Covid "Cases"

By Jeff Deist, Mises Institute, 3 October 2020

Today's headlines announced Donald and Melania Trump "tested positive" for covid-19. Another claims nineteen thousand Amazon workers "got" covid-19 on the job. Both of these pseudostories are sure to ignite another absurd media frenzy.

As always, the story keeps changing: Remember ventilators, flatten the curve, the next two weeks are crucial, etc.? Remember Nancy Pelosi in Chinatown back in February, urging everyone to visit? Remember Fauci dismissing masks as useless? Why should we believe anything the political/media complex tells us now?

So what do these headlines really mean? What exactly is a covid "case"?

Since the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak, most US media outlets have been exceedingly credulous and complicit in their reporting. Journalists almost uniformly promote what we can call the "prolockdown" narrative, which is to wildly exaggerate the risks from covid-19 to serve a political agenda. They may be motivated to hurt Trump politically, to promote a more socialist "new normal," or simply to drive more clicks and views. Bad news sells. But the bias is clear and undeniable.

This explains why media outlets use the terms "case" and "infection" so loosely, to the point of actively misinforming the public. All of the endless talk about testing, testing, testing served to obscure two important facts. First, the tests themselves are almost laughably unreliable in producing both false positives and negatives. And what is the point? Are we going to test people again and again, every time they go out to the grocery or bump into a neighbor? Second, detecting virus particles or droplets in a human's respiratory tract tells us very little. It certainly does not tell us they are sick, or transmitting sickness to anyone.

Take a perfectly healthy person with no particular symptoms and swab the inside of their nose. If the culture shows the presence of *staphylococcus aureus*, do we insist they have a staph infection? When someone drives to work without incident or accident, do we create statistics about their exposure to traffic?

A virus is not a disease. Only a very small percentage of those exposed to the virus itself--SARS-CoV-2--show any kind of acute respiratory symptoms, or what we can call "coronavirus disease."

The only meaningful statistics show the incidence of serious illness, hospitalizations, and deaths. The single most important statistic among these is the infection fatality rate (IFR). Data collected through July [shows](#) that the IFR for those under age forty-five is actually *lower* than that of the common flu. The covid-19 IFR rises for those over fifty, but it is hardly a death sentence. And the data does not segregate those with preexisting health issues caused by obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. If we could see data only for reasonably healthy people under fifty, the numbers would be even more reassuring.

Mild or asymptomatic covid cases are effectively meaningless. The world is full of bacteria and viruses, and sometimes they make us a bit sick for a few days. There are millions of them in the world all around us, on our skin, in our nose and respiratory tract, in our organs. We are meant to live with them, which is why we all have immune systems designed to help us coexist and adapt to ever-changing organisms. We develop antibodies naturally, or we

attempt to stimulate them through vaccines, but ultimately our own immune systems have to deal with covid-19. The virus will always be out there waiting, on the other side of any lockdown or mask—so we might as well get on with it.

From day one the focus should have been on boosting immunity through exercise, fresh air, sunlight, proper dietary supplementation, and the promotion of general well-being. Instead our politicians, bureaucrats, and media insisted on business lockdowns, school closures, distancing, isolation, masks, and the mirage of a fast, effective vaccine. As with almost everything in life, state intervention made the situation worse. We can only hope many governors are removed from office, either by impeachment or at the next election. Several, including Andrew Cuomo in New York and Gretchen Whitmer in Michigan, should face criminal charges for their lawless edicts. There is no due process exception for "public health."

[Lockdowns were never justified](#), either in terms of the covid-19 risk or the staggering economic tradeoffs, which will be felt for decades. They certainly are not justified now, given seven months of additional data showing that the transmission and lethality of covid-19 are not particularly worse than previous SARS, swine flu, or Ebola pandemics. We still don't know how many of the reported two hundred thousand US covid-19 deaths were *actually caused* by the SARS-CoV-2 respiratory disease, or simply reflect people who died of other causes after exposure to covid-19. We do know that the harms caused by the lockdowns far outweigh the harms posed by the covid-19 virus.

We have had nearly eight months of life and liberty stolen from us by politicians and their hysteria-promoting accomplices in media. How much more will we accept?