

## Coronavirus

With so much information being broadcast over the media, I felt it imperative that CITP respond with some helpful information. This document, I hope, provides some background, insight, and some recommendations in this time of stress. Faith in God and rational informed thought is what is needed at this time, not panic.

### Background

Based upon my experience and education dealing with infectious disease, despite the current news media reporting, I feel that the response of the general public, all levels of government and the scientific/medical community has been astonishing. After only 45 days, a vaccine is already being tested. The nation is dealing with very complex issues, scientific and societal, and these cannot be solved overnight. Nature can be very enigmatic. We, as a group, need to understand this and show patience, love and understanding while we endure this trial. How we react determines our level of humanity. That said:

Coronavirus is just that, a virus. All living things have genetic material that largely define our physical and mental characteristics. You and I have DNA of which there are infinite code combinations within our bodies. Viruses being so small (think electron microscope) have genetic material called RNA in very minute amounts. It basically addresses reproduction. A virus attaches itself to a living cell, injects its RNA which overrides the cell's DNA and causes the cell to replicate the virus. The cell will erupt and the newly formed viruses will enter the system.

A situation that develops is that some viral diseases have stable RNA which doesn't change from generation to generation. For those diseases such as Measles, Mumps, Rubella and Chicken Pox, researchers can develop effective vaccines for immunity.

Some viral infections such as influenza have unstable RNA which will mutate passing through generations. This means that the vaccines are hard to develop and sometimes not very effective. That's why you hear about any given year's flu vaccine relative ineffectiveness. The vaccine does not line up completely with the virus's actual RNA.

We, as a nation, are early in the process and we (the public) have not heard if the RNA in coronavirus is stable or not. By virtue of the fact that vaccines are already being tested, the medical/scientific community is proceeding as though it is stable. That would be good news indeed.

I caution you to take any talk of statistics with skepticism. The problem lies in that fact that the pundits don't have any real idea as to the numbers of actual infections. In addition, there are projections being made by people that are just false and demonstrate a basic ignorance of statistics and disease dynamics. Once the accelerated tests are online you will see a big jump in identified cases. Don't be alarmed, this basically reflects existing cases, it is totally expected. As with most viral diseases, exposure is always far greater than the cases actually identified. People, due to individual immune systems, can be asymptomatic or show very minor symptoms and are never identified.

Since the general news is so unreliable at this point, we have some suggestions as to reliable sources.

The first site belongs to the Center for Disease Control (CDC). This is easily accessed through CDC.gov and look for the Coronavirus link. You will find the most accurate facts available.

Secondly, as far as Television is concerned. The PBS News Hour UNC-TV at 6:00 pm (repeated at 7:00 pm) is a good source for news of the day. This also available on line at the UNC-TV/PBS website after the broadcast.

If you see, during your daily scanning of the news, that a press conference is being held by State/Federal Officials tune in to the actual news conference so that you know exactly what is happening.

For medical info, reference WEBMD but be aware that symptoms will vary from person to person. This leads into our next section.

### General Care Plan for the Well:

With any crisis, preparation is the key. Let's start with creating a list of the information you might need:

- 1.) Medical Histories for family members including pre-existing medical conditions.
- 2.) List of all medications and current dosages

The need for this info will be explained later when we get to the actions related to if someone actually contracts the disease.

Now how can we protect ourselves from catching this stuff?

Self-Quarantine-This is the most effective tool in our kit. Stay away from large crowds and sick people. The young people have termed this "social distancing". This is critically important if you have an underlying condition such as Heart Disease, COPD, Diabetes etc. You should also include influenza and any of its secondary infections (Pneumonia). Another factor to be considered is if you take immunosuppressant drugs. (Know your medications and keep a list of current meds on your person at all times).

You need to establish a support system. This could mean establishing an arrangement with a neighbor for transportation to and from the doctor's office should someone get sick. It also provides someone to talk to on a regular basis to keep the lines of communication open. Think ahead, Plan.

If you need to go to the grocery store, Plan on making the trip off hours. Make short trips. Buy what you need, don't hoard. For instance, if you want to get some storable items such as soup, buy just a few cans during each trip, you would be amazed as to how they will accumulate over time. (The beauty of this is that when this is over, you can donate such items to a food bank.) If you can freeze something perishable, that is an appropriate buy. An extra container of ground turkey in the freezer wouldn't hurt. There is no point in accumulating things that you can't freeze like milk.

If you have contact with young and mobile teens and adults, you need to inform them to maintain social distancing and observing sanitary precautions. Avoid concerts, parties, malls etc. This has come to light as a huge problem as young people view themselves as indestructible. They don't consider who they might be infecting.

Check your supply of prescription medicines. If you require critical maintenance medications, make sure you have enough on hand. If not, call your doctor.

Wash Your Hands Frequently (Avoid touching your face)-Washing your hands with plain old soap and warm water can reduce your chance of infection by up to 50%.

Coronavirus is spread by droplets either by inhalation or ingestion.

Live a healthy life style- If you can get outside, please go. You will not catch coronavirus from fresh air and exercise will help ease any sense of isolation. You will run into others on your walks, say Hello, stay six feet or farther and go on your way. If you know them and you want to talk to them longer, just tell them you will call them on the phone. In addition, 30 minutes outside between 10am and 3pm will help your body produce Vitamin D3 which has come to light as a critical component in the function of your immune system and avoiding depression. Another great activity is working in the yard or gardening. You can always help the gardening crew at the church.

Maintain a healthy diet. Some people live to eat; this is a situation where you need to eat to live. By that, we mean proper balance of proteins, carbohydrates, ruffage etc. Since activity is limited, avoiding weight gain can be problematic. Cut back on the sugars, sodas, alcohol etc. Your immune system depends upon a balanced diet. Eggs are a wonderful source of lean protein and they will store well in a refrigerator. Peanut Butter is good for a protein snack (in moderation).

Drink Water and Plenty of It-This is often overlooked but the average person should be consuming between 1.5 – 2 liters of water per day (Water, not iced tea, not diet soda). This will help keep your immune system healthy. If you have heart/circulation issues that require fluid restrictions such as congestive heart failure, consult your physician. If you have any questions, consult your physician.

Sleep. Get plenty of sleep.

Search for activities that will engage your mind and attention. Of course, if you are working from home and/or doing your taxes, your mind is already engaged. Alternative activities can include:

- 1.) Read Books. Pick a subject and become an expert on any field that interests you.
- 2.) Address home projects that don't require you to go out as in cleaning out your closets, cleaning the garage, bathing the dog. Deep cleaning the house.
- 3.) Puzzles and games (especially if you have kids.) Besides if you have kids and a nice yard. Send them out for fresh air and play to help relieve the stress of people being confined in tight places.
- 4.) If you need to talk to someone face to face outside the immediate family, set up a online connection with Facetime (Apple) or Skype. It could be an interesting afternoon setting up a routine and having outside contact with others.

- 5.)Speaking of on-line activities, we really recommend limiting exposure to social media.
- 6.)Any hobbies that you in which you already participate.

### What to do if you get sick

I want to preface this section by saying “Panic” is not an option. Panic often occurs when we think about the potential implications for ourselves. Take a deep breath, say a Prayer asking God to help you focus on the task at hand, take another deep breath and move ahead. I can’t tell you how many times, I and other nurses would have to confront codes/life threatening situations and say a quick quiet prayer and all our fear/panic would disappear and we could approach our task with calm and professionalism.

One more thing, in addition to having your personal physician(s) and the hospital Emergency Room, I would encourage you to locate the closest Emergency Care Facility associated with the major university hospitals. These can be invaluable in the function of the Health Care System.

### No pre-existing conditions and under the age of 60

Insulate other people from the sick individual. Intensify your cleaning regimen, Wash hands frequently. If you can get nitrile surgical gloves at the store (like the ones used at fast food places) use them for handling dirty linens clothes etc.

Viral infections almost always involve developing a fever. It’s nature’s way of killing the pathogen. Often times fevers can reach 102-103 F (104 to 105 is getting dangerously high) Coronavirus is no exception and it can easily be mistaken for the flu. But let’s look for a combination of symptoms to be aware of.

- 1.)Fever-elevated temps starting at 100.4F or 37.5C require observation.

- 2.)Dry Cough
- 3.)Headaches
- 4.)Muscle weakness
- 5.)Shortness of breath

Any combination of these symptoms should prompt a phone call to your physician.

You will be asked:

- 1.)About the type, timing and level of the symptoms.
- 2.)Pre-existing conditions
- 3.)Medications and last administration of said medications
- 4.)Recent history about recent places you have visited and people you might have had contact with.

If you are not asked, volunteer the information. The goal here is to prevent any potential shortcoming or medical errors. It can also provide information to track down other infected people.

Follow your physician's instructions. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask the doctor/nurse. Be assertive you are protecting your family.

This point is very important, Secondary Infections can be devastating. Pneumonia is a secondary infection that can often follow the flu and the Coronavirus. When the high temperature drops, it should drop to normal levels, 98.6F (37C). If a 104 fever drops to 101, this is not a sign that the patient is recovering. It signals that a secondary infection is in place. This should prompt an immediate call to your physician.

If the physician prescribes an antibiotic, this is to prevent/cure bacterial pneumonia. This type of drug does not address viral infections. Although some antiviral drugs do exist, their performance has been spotty. The body's immune system was designed to heal the virus.

You should take the antibiotic until completion of the prescription. If you stop taking the drug prematurely, the infection may re-emerge in a more virulent fashion. Always complete the prescription.

### Pre-existing conditions and/or over the age of 60

All of the problems associated with the Coronavirus are exacerbated with pre-existing conditions and/or advanced age. The average age of fatalities due to this contagion is around 81 and oftentimes these people suffer from heart disease, lung disease, and diabetes. With the loss of immunity with advanced age and other afflictions, the situation could turn, let's be frank here, deadly. Time is of the essence.

The prior recommendations about your documented history and medications is more critical than ever. Make sure you have this information available even if you are in good health.

Let's repeat the symptoms from above.

- 1.)Fever-elevated temps starting at 100.4F or 37.5C require observation.
- 2.)Dry Cough
- 3.)Headaches
- 4.)Muscle weakness
- 5.)Shortness of breath

The key difference from above is that if you are experiencing any of the above symptoms, contact your physician immediately and follow their instructions. If your physician is not available, contact the closest emergency care facility and follow their instructions. Make contact with your partner about your situation and keep them in the loop. Make sure that they have your history and med list. Make arrangements for transportation.

If you notice that you or your loved one has slow and painful breathing and they seem like they're gasping for air. Call 911 immediately.

I need to mention that Emergency Rooms are frequently disaster areas. In order to prioritize treatment, ER's are staffed with Triage Nurses. Your goal is to get by the triage nurse as soon as possible to get into treatment. By contacting your Physician or Emergency Care Center, you might be able to bypass triage as they will contact the hospital for you.

If you have to go to the ER without prior consulting, make certain you have all of the information that I have already listed:

- 1.) About the type, timing and level of the symptoms.
- 2.) Pre-existing conditions
- 3.) Medications and last administration of said medications
- 4.) Recent history about recent places you have visited and people you might have had contact with.

This will give the triage nurse the information, necessary to get you to treatment.

Some other useful info, if hospitalization is necessary, you will be asked multiple times by various medical staff about history etc. This might be a pain for the patient and family but the staff is trying to ascertain and identify discrepancies that might cause an error in treatment. Also, as a clinical nurse, my only concern was to keep you safe and bring you back to health. That is the heart and soul of the profession. Believe it or not, Nurses do care deeply about their patients.

In conclusion, these are the things I would do if this infection was to enter my home. I hope you find it useful.

Vince Walker, Deacon