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Putting COVID-19 in Perspective

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is caused by a virus, SARS-CoV-2. Viruses are not a bug like bacteria. They are strands of genetic material, RNA, and DNA. The COVID-19 virus is an RNA virus. This virus, once it enters the body relies on your own cells to incorporate the RNA into its replication processes to produce more viruses, resulting in disease.

The most prevalent test used for the disease is the RT-PCR test. More specifically the Reverse-Transcriptase PCR. What the test does is magnify the amount of RNA or fragments of the COVID-19 virus. The test essentially takes as few as one fragment of the 30,000 base pairs that make up the genome of the virus and replicates it several times to levels where detection is possible. The first cycle produces two copies, the second cycle produces four copies, and continues for up to forty plus cycles. The result is literally millions of copies of the original fragment.

The goal is to create enough copies, if present, to be easily detected. The test is very accurate and is dependent upon the quality of the sample. Dead virus particles can be replicated and result in a false positive. That is the primary reasoning for utilizing the test for those exhibiting symptoms to confirm the disease. The bottom line is that if the virus is detected within 30–32 cycles, that test is positive, and that individual has the infection. The testing laboratory's equipment uses the FDA approved threshold of 37 cycles to determine positive or negative sample results.

We cannot ignore the worst-case scenario of this disease, that being chronic illness, hospitalization, and even death. The death rate is 1% of the total cases reported by KDHE. **But we need to put the situation into perspective.** The most recent 2019 data from KDHE listing the causes of death in Kansas were:

1. Abortion, 6,916
2. Heart Disease, 6,058
3. Cancer, 5,520
4. Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease (influenza, including pneumonia), 1,774
5. Accidents, 1,578
6. Stroke, 1,283
7. COVID-19, as of November 16, 2020 stands at 1,266

The obvious difference here is that COVID-19 is a communicable disease and will spread further throughout the population. The only exception may be Number 4, that includes pneumonia caused by influenza viruses.

This virus may be with us for an extended period. This type of RNA virus is prone to changing (mutating), much like its cousin the influenza virus. Great hope is placed on a vaccine and that the virus remains susceptible when it becomes available. Until then, we all must be vigilant and protect others by staying home if ill. Washing hands often is good advice.

We must also recognize the unintended consequences following government intervention (I will be generous and say it was well intended.) The shutdown has caused irrefutable damage. Many businesses have closed, never to reopen. Buying habits have changed to internet purchases, causing a rapid change in local brick and mortar businesses' ability to survive. In just nine months, we have seen the basic business models change, family units disengage, and church attendance dwindle or even stop. The education of our children has been disrupted to such an extent that educators are wondering if they will catch up intellectually. Our elderly may have been most affected. Those in care facilities have been isolated from family and friends resulting in an increase in depression and loneliness.

Another unintended consequence of the shutdown and stay at home orders is the increase illness and deaths due to lack of medical care. Clinics were discouraging office visits and patients were afraid to seek medical attention to include cancer treatments. We will know later how devastating the reduced medical care really was in 2020.

How each of us react to the pandemic is a personal decision and responsibility. We each must decide the risk we are willing to take. This is not a disease with a mortality rate like EBOLA, for example, where the government should react as its sworn duty to protect its citizens. The government has the responsibility to educate the public about the danger, how we can protect ourselves, and recommend methods to do so. The government should practice the Hippocratic Oath which states, above all to do no harm. Local governments, those closest to the people, have the ultimate responsibility to impose restrictions during a disease outbreak. By Kansas law it is solely their responsibility to make that decision.

I am sharing with you information I have gathered from several scientific articles, KDHE, CDC, FDA, and what I learned after visiting with personnel at one of the laboratories doing the testing and reporting of their results to KDHE electronically every 15 minutes.

A statement by Lou Holtz during an August 2020 interview sums up the attitude of many with whom I have visited:

“Don’t Save My Life by Preventing Me from Living!”

I am humbled and honored to be called to serve as your Representative at the Statehouse. Thank you for electing me as your Representative from District 51. I take this responsibility very conscientiously and have worked to help whenever called upon.

I close this message by wishing everyone a wonderful Thanksgiving. Please join with me in giving thanks for our Savior, family, friends, and Representative Republic form of government, founded to insure our individual rights and freedoms.

May I be among the first to send you Christmas Greetings. My hope is that Christmas brings you the happiness and joy this world so desperately needs as we close this uncertain year and celebrate with confidence in the birth of our Savior.

Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas to you and yours!

With kind regards,

Ron