

# THE FOUR PILLARS TO HEALTH & WELLNESS

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## HEALTH

### April update on the 2019 Novel Corona Virus (COVID-19)

by Dominic Dizon, MD

When I first wrote the update in early February, 2020, the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 was 47,000 worldwide, with 46,550 coming from China. There was 1 confirmed death in cases outside China and 1368 deaths in China. In the United States, there were only 15 confirmed cases of COVID-19 across 7 states, most of which were in California.

#### Times had rapidly changed.

As of April 1, 2020, the global pandemic (declared on March 11) has involved more than **885,000 cases**, was reported in **over 200 countries and territories**, and has resulted in approximately **44,200 deaths**. A lot of the deaths had come from European countries such as Italy, Spain, France, and the United Kingdom, making Europe the current epicenter, per the WHO. It has now gripped and affected the lives of billions of people throughout the world. One ray of hope to cling on is that, more than **185,000 people have recovered** from the disease.

As you all know, the United States now leads the world with total number of cases at almost **190,000**. Six weeks ago, we had 15 cases. Six weeks ago, we had no deaths. Today, we are up to **4,081 deaths** and we expect this number to go up significantly, especially for the month of April.

However, I am always a **hopeful** person and an optimistic doctor. I took an oath upon graduation from medical school which includes, **“I will use treatment to help the sick according to my ability and judgment”** and **“Into whatsoever houses I enter, I will enter to help the sick”**. To this effect, I continue to serve in 2 emergency departments, to see patients in my office (albeit some of them with phone visits only due to being high risk), and to do home visits for the most vulnerable patients.

I believe in **Hope**. In the **Encyclical Deo Caritas Est**, Pope Benedict XVI wrote, “Faith, hope and charity go together. **Hope** is practised through the virtue of patience, which continues to do good even in the face of apparent failure, and through the virtue of humility, which accepts God’s mystery and trusts him even at times of darkness.”

I am also sincerely grateful to Bishop Joe Brennan for the difficult but much needed decisions outlined in the **Covid-19 Protective Measures As Of 3/18/20**. Please do read this document carefully as it can save lives. My children are still in

Catholic schools and I appreciate the love our Bishop has for all the children and parishioners throughout the diocese.

With regards to **hope**, I think there is help on the way. I earnestly believe these diocesan, state and national shelters-in-place and social distancing will finally bear fruit soon as we will start seeing the now famous “flattening of the curve” for COVID-19. In terms of treatment, the FDA gave emergency approval for the use of the Hydroxychloroquine and Azithromycin for patients documented to have COVID-19. I had prescribed Hydroxychloroquine multiple times in the past for autoimmune disorders like Lupus and Rheumatoid Arthritis and it is well tolerated. Azithromycin is an antibiotic frequently used for bacterial pneumonia and bronchitis but is used here in COVID-19 for its anti-inflammatory properties.

When it comes to testing, we have been doing this a lot in the ERs where I work and in the office. However, the holdup has been the length of time it takes to get the results back. Sometimes, up to 2 weeks. However, a lot of local hospitals have now purchased the equipment and reagents to do the 45-minute antigen test. These should be ready for prime time over the next 2-3 weeks. The FDA also approved late last week the Point of Care Rapid COVID-19 Antibody test from Abbott Laboratories using the ID Now platform that will give you the results in 5 minutes if positive, and in 15 minutes if negative. I have already ordered the machine to do this test in my medical office and hopefully can get this primed and ready to go this month.

Finally, I have been getting continued podcasts and text messages from ER physicians throughout the country regarding better characterization of **the enemy, the SARS CoV 2 virus**. We now know more about how it presents clinically, incubation period, timeline of symptoms, serological and radiological abnormalities in the ER, and when best to intubate the patient or apply our novel treatments. Moreover, we are now learning how best to protect ourselves with **PPEs** so we can continue to stay safe and stay healthy so as to help more patients who are coming in. This is also important so we can come home to our families and not infect our loved ones.

This is it for now and we certainly appreciate all your prayers as we continue in this battle. We’re all in this together.

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