

Dr. Brownstein's Blog on Coronavirus Part XII

Coronavirus XII: There Is Good News

I was at Costco yesterday and did NOT enjoy my experience. The tension was palpable everywhere. (Note: This had nothing to do with Costco.) There were shoppers wearing N95 masks. That irritated me. The masks are in short supply for front-line health care workers and there is simply no reason to wear that at Costco. *COVID is not passed that easily through the air.*

Folks, the fear level out there is beyond reason. **Unfortunately, my Governor and the rest of our lawmakers, including those in Washington, are making big decisions based on fear and not based on data.** As I have been writing to you, the data is out there that COVID-19 is serious but only to a small percentage of our population—when all is said and done, less than 1%.

Could I be wrong? Of course, it wouldn't be the first time. But, I have learned to do my own research and trust myself with the conclusions I come to. I utilize my research and my practical experience in order to make an appropriate decision about how to treat my patients or how to approach this COVID-19 pandemic.

I have been practicing medicine for over 25 years. During that time I have become a much better physician than I was at the beginning (at least I hope so). In medical school you learn far too many things that have no relevance in the real practice of medicine. *Only when you get out in the real world does the real teaching begin.* But, medical school did teach me important tools to become a competent physician.

One of the main things I was taught in medical school was to observe my patients. That was an important lesson. I observe how they look, walk, sound, and act. And, I observe recurring patterns with respect to diseases.

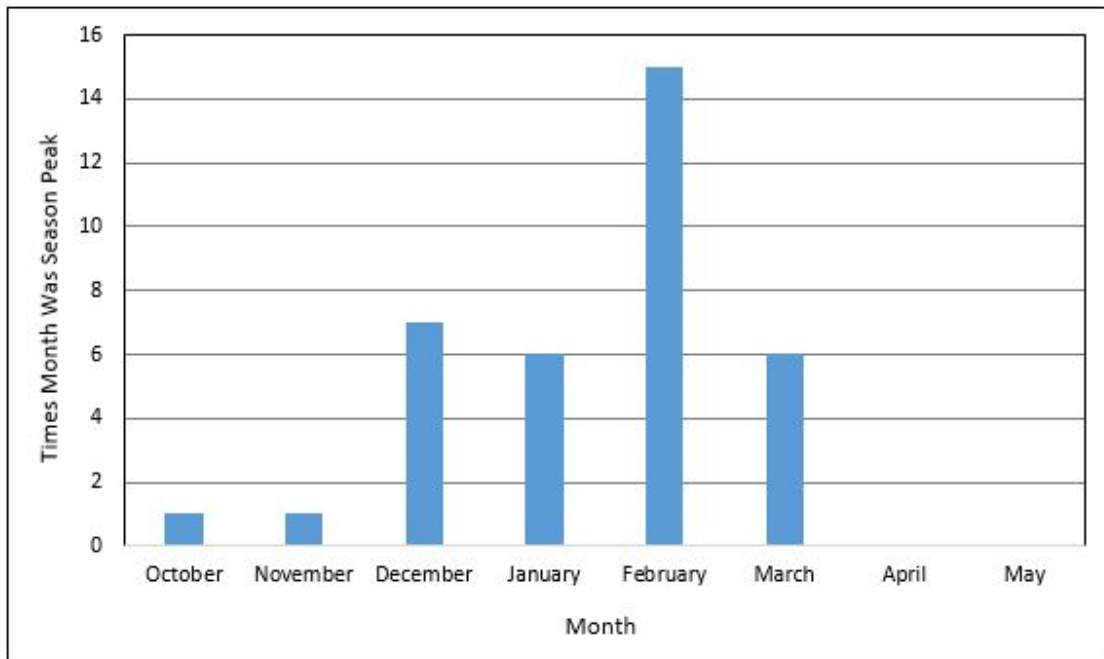
I have found it useful to observe disease patterns since many diseases consistently appear and disappear according to the calendar. One pattern that consistently repeats itself is that the flu season (for most) seems to start around the winter solstice (December 20-23) and ends around the spring equinox (March 19-21). This year the spring equinox was on March 20, 2020.

I have seen the reports that COVID-19 may be going on for up to 18 months. Some commentators are saying that we need to quarantine for at least six months to a year to get rid of it.

I SAY, HOGWASH!

Look at the following chart from the CDC that summarizes the peak month of flu activity from 1982-2018:

You can see the season starts in October and November with low numbers, peaks in January and February and begins to decline in March. The peak month of activity can change between the months of January, February and March. Keep in mind, this chart is an *average of the activity between 1982-2018*.



I have observed, on a yearly basis, that my patients begin to get less colds and other influenza-like illnesses around the spring equinox. Some go into April and few go into May with viral infections, but they are usually fewer and fewer the further away from the spring solstice date. My four partners—Drs. Ng and Nusbaum, Jenny and Taylor all concur with this assessment. Between all of us, we have over 100 years of experience seeing this pattern.

So, *what does this have to do with COVID-19?* COVID-19 is more contagious than the common flu, but not that much more contagious. The 'R naught' (R_0) is an estimate for how many other people one sick person is likely to infect. The R_0 for the common flu is *1.3 meaning one person can spread it 1.3 others*. The R_0 for COVID-19 is *2-3.11 meaning one infected person can spread it to 2-3.1 others*. For comparison, the R_0 for measles is 11-18. COVID-19 is more contagious than the common flu but much less contagious than measles. This should limit how long the illness lasts.

Coronaviruses do not like warm temperatures and higher humidity. As we warm in the spring, that should help. But, as previously stated, I have seen the spring equinox lower the incidence of flu-like illnesses for over 25 years. Some years, it takes a little while longer than others. However, I am only referring to a few weeks after the equinox.

Let me finally jump off my cliff here without a parachute. (BTW, I had an interesting parachuting experience when I was 18—that is for another time.) I predict that COVID-19 will begin to recede

in its lethality over the next 2-3 weeks. The number of cases may still rise during this time *because we have a back-log of tests and are testing more.* I also predict the number of cases will begin to decline in 3-4 weeks—regardless of what we do. We are coming to the end of the flu season and I see no reason why COVID-19 would behave differently than any other flu-like virus.

Could I be wrong? Yes. The virus could mutate to a more aggressive strain. But, it could also mutate to a less lethal strain as well. Most highly aggressive and lethal viral strains eventually fade out after a short time on their own.

Time will tell if I am right. Unless this virus is markedly different than the other 200 or so flu-like viruses, we should be in for much better times very soon.

Don't let your fear rise when all the new cases are reported. They are being reported in increasing numbers because we are testing more. The death rate is continuing to decline, just as I predicted it would. As of this writing (3.22.20), there have been 349 deaths and 29,270 infected. That results in a death rate of 1.2%. Initially, the US COVID-19 fatality rate was between 2-3% (though I can't cite this, I am taking this from my memory). This rate continues to decline because there are many more who recover uneventfully from COVID-19. The media only sensationalizes the very ill and dying. The headline on MSN right now epitomizes the fear-based reporting by stating, "US Death Toll Rises..." It is a true headline as more have died over the last 24 hours. Perhaps a better headline could read, "Death rate for COVID-19 falls as more are tested."

Folks, I know this is serious stuff. People have died and more will die. It is important to not let fear guide your decisions. Fear is guiding our Government right now and that is not going well for us. Take your supplements. See a holistic doctor. Eat well—avoid refined sugar! Maintain optimal hydration. These are some of the holistic steps you can take to avoid becoming a statistic in this crisis. We will overcome this, and I think better times are coming soon.

To All Our Health,
~DrB

David Brownstein, MD is a conventionally trained Board-Certified Family Physician with the additional overlay of holistic principles.

While Dr. Brownstein does not claim to have a cure for any illness, he does believe that we can enhance the individual's immune system by supporting the 'host' & the terrain of the host. The human body is well designed and the immune system, when given the proper support, can optimally function.

Disclaimer: The information on this account should not be used as medical advice. Any therapies that are discussed should be supervised under the guidance of your physician or licensed healthcare professional.