

Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

By Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.

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“COVID-19 Claimed to Be Number One Cause of Death in America”

According to an editorial published Thursday in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, COVID-19 is now the leading cause of death in the United States. Current daily mortality rates show that COVID-19 has now surpassed heart disease and cancer as the leading daily cause of death in the U.S. Heart disease and cancer, which have been the leading causes of death for decades, cause approximately 1,700 and 1,600 deaths per day, respectively. But since November, the weekly average for daily COVID-19 deaths has tripled, from 826 to 2,430 deaths per day. One American is dying of COVID-19 every 40 seconds now. Steven Woolf, M.D., director emeritus of VCU's Center on Society and Health, said “It's a tragic milestone we could've prevented. Looking ahead offers the hope of the vaccine, but it's not coming fast enough to save the people who are dying now.” Woolf also said, “It's urgent for Americans to get serious about wearing masks, social distancing and avoiding large gatherings, or else we're going to see more alarming numbers and COVID-19 will remain a leading cause of death for far too long.” Personally, I feel we have been given these directives to create a false sense of security. Man's record on dealing with pandemics is a record of failure and COVID-19 is falling right into place. This is especially true with the arrival of mutant strains, which are proving to be much more transmissible and may be more fatal than its predecessor. Some authors say, “The point is that this loss of life is preventable. Looking in the rearview mirror, so many of the deaths that have already occurred could have been avoided.” COVID-19 has essentially disrupted our entire system of health care. As I have previously stated, “There's no telling how much—or little—this pandemic will affect hospitals, clinics, and physicians in the long term. But the evidence that some effects will become permanent is compelling. Physicians will operate in a healthcare system altered by financial ruin, technology, and other evolutions spurred by the pandemic.” Doctor visits will go “virtual.” The CDC has advised medical practices to “make long-term changes to practices and procedures,” including no longer using porous materials for seating, leaving doors open, and upgrading ventilation systems. Interpreting the available data is becoming increasingly difficult and we no longer trust death rates and mortality figures. The CDC just confirmed a .2% death-rate for COVID-19, but is that reliable? Fear and fabrications regarding COVID-19 has proven deadly to our economy in just a few tragic months.

In the America that I love, we must stop accepting misinformation regarding COVID-19. Try to find any reliable scientific truths and act accordingly but do not panic.

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