



Facts — not fear — will stop the pandemic

BY JAY BHATTACHARYA AND CHRISTOS A. MAKRIDIS, OPINION CONTRIBUTORS — 12/03/20 02:30 PM EST
THE VIEWS EXPRESSED BY CONTRIBUTORS ARE THEIR OWN AND NOT THE VIEW OF THE HILL

4,109 SHARES

Just In...

House conservatives ramp up efforts on child care bills

HOUSE — 4H 4M AGO

South Korea's Moon gets AstraZeneca vaccine

INTERNATIONAL — 4H 12M AGO

Study suggests adults under stay-at-home orders gained nearly two pounds a month

HEALTHCARE — 4H 38M AGO

Kim Janey is first woman, person of color to be mayor of Boston

STATE WATCH — 4H 54M AGO

10 dead in Colorado supermarket shooting

STATE WATCH — 5H 2M AGO

WH withdraws deputy Interior secretary amid pushback from Murkowski: report

ADMINISTRATION — 5H 46M AGO

Accused Atlanta shooter now faces malice murder charges

STATE WATCH — 6H 19M AGO

House Democrats demand answers on slow \$1,400 checks

HOUSE — 6H 44M AGO

[VIEW ALL](#)



© GETTY IMAGES

The media relish negative news. “If it bleeds it leads” still holds, and perhaps it’s never been truer than in the COVID-19 era. Every day the news highlights the spread of the virus and tells the sad stories of some of its victims.

And yet, much of the media does not pay sufficient attention to the good news regarding improved treatments and survival of patients with the coronavirus. In contrast with the international media, the American press has been unrelentingly negative in its COVID coverage, even when there is good news to tell. That negativity is part of what fuels a culture of fear that affects local, state and federal politicians and the decisions they make.

But there is a lot of good news to tell. The case fatality rate from the virus has dropped sharply since March. The infection survival rate is 99.95 percent for people under 70 and 95 percent for people over 70. Hospitals are much better equipped to handle patients, with improved ventilator protocols, improved management of outpatients and new therapeutic strategies to provide relief and recoveries. Moreover, thanks to multiple ongoing clinical trials around the world, there may soon be a safe and effective vaccine.

By contrast with their focus on COVID deaths, the media have paid scant attention to the enormous medical and psychological harms from the lockdowns in use to slow the pandemic. Despite the enormous collateral

[View Latest Opinions >>](#)

[damage](#) lockdowns have caused, [England](#), [France](#), [Germany](#), Spain and other European countries are all intensifying their lockdowns once again.

By lockdowns, we mean the all-too-familiar shuttered schools and universities, closed playgrounds and parks, silent churches and bankrupt stores and businesses that have become emblematic of American civic life these past months. The relative dearth of reporting on the harms caused by lockdowns is odd, since lives lost from lockdown are no less important than lives lost from COVID infection. But they've received much less media attention.

The harms from lockdown have been catastrophic. Consider the psychological harm. Reader, since you're reading this in lockdown, you can undoubtedly relate to the isolation and loneliness that these policies can cause by shutting down typical channels for social interaction. In June, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimated that [one in four](#) young adults had seriously considered suicide. Opioid and other drug related deaths are on a sharp and unsurprising [upswing](#).

The burden of these policies falls disproportionately on some of the most vulnerable. For example, isolation led to [a 20 percent increase](#) in dementia-related deaths among our elderly population. Moreover, retrospective analysis of the lockdown in the United States shows that patients skipped [cancer screenings](#), [childhood immunizations](#), [diabetes management visits](#) and even [treatment for heart attacks](#).

Internationally, the lockdowns have placed [130 million people](#) on the brink of starvation, [80 million children](#) at risk for diphtheria, measles and polio, and [1.8 million patients](#) at risk of death from tuberculosis. The lockdowns in developed countries have [devastated](#) the poor in poor countries. The World Economic Forum [estimates](#) that the lockdowns will cause an additional 150 million people to fall into extreme poverty, 125 times as many people as have died from COVID.

Though there has been some [coverage](#) of lockdown harms, the media have not paid the same attention to it as they have to COVID deaths. If there is a COVID-death tracker, there should be side-by-side with it a lockdown-death tracker.

The lack of balanced media attention towards the good news about the virus and the costs of lockdowns comes with its own cost. Without a balanced approach to COVID news, the public cannot make informed choices about COVID policy, such as [school closures](#). Even a diligent citizen cannot make an informed judgment about the wisdom of continuing lockdowns if only their benefits are emphasized and their costs downplayed. The media have an obligation to show both.

USDA increasing SNAP benefits with pandemic relief funds

Cruz presses Biden on media access for border tour

Finally, the neglect of the good COVID news breeds panic and fear, which is never a good public health strategy. The public should know that the pandemic will not be here forever. While these are challenging times – and, for many families, life-changing times – like every other pandemic in human history, the COVID-19 pandemic will end. With wise and informed policy choices, we can reduce its ultimate toll of death and human misery.

Jay Bhattacharya, MD, PhD is a professor of medicine at Stanford University and a research fellow at the National Bureau of Economics Research. Prof. Bhattacharya's research work focuses on the epidemiology of COVID-19 and on effects of COVID-19 lockdown policy. He is the co-author of the [Great Barrington declaration](#).

Christos A. Makridis, PhD is an assistant research professor at Arizona State University, a non-resident fellow at Baylor University and a senior adviser at Gallup. Christos previously served on the White House Council of Economic Advisers. Follow him on Twitter and Instagram @camakridis.

**TAGS PFIZER CORONAVIRUS WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION; CDC COVID-19 PANDEMIC LOCKDOWNS
COVID-19 PANDEMIC #CORONAVIRUS #2019NCOV #CONTAGION**



**THE HILL 1625 K STREET, NW SUITE 900 WASHINGTON DC 20006 | 202-628-8500 TEL | 202-628-8503 FAX
THE CONTENTS OF THIS SITE ARE ©2021 CAPITOL HILL PUBLISHING CORP., A SUBSIDIARY OF NEWS COMMUNICATIONS, INC.**