

Update on Coronavirus-19

By B. Ka'imiloa Chrisman, M.D.

It's been two months since my prior article on Covid-19. Much has transpired, yet space constraints mean I can't share nearly as much as I'd like. Kala mai (pardon me), I don't like sharing some of these facts any more than most of you like hearing them, yet it is aloha spirit that drives my sharing, especially in regard to kupuna and those with other strong risk factors. Help these people stay safe by avoiding contact, or, for example, jointly figuring with them a way they can work from home.

Of many difficult things, for us the lack of hug, honi and getting together borders on painful. Or the idea that not going to visit, aid or cheer up kupuna is the best aloha you can show them. Yet that's true - visit remotely. (It's tough for me too, no visitors or visiting!)

That our society is opening up by necessity does not mean the virus isn't out there, and I see much evidence that people are throwing caution to the wind. That's foolish, for the evidence is now clear that masks and social distancing have made a major difference in the U.S. and elsewhere. Both are still necessary.

No, the pandemic is not a conspiracy or a farce, so respecting it is essential. Yes, what you hear, see or read is often politicized - be cautious of that negativity.

The "co-morbidities" remain critical for severe illness and risk of death. Older age is the most prominent one. People over 65 continue to be at major risk, and should stay home and be very careful. Other underlying conditions remain: chronic lung disease, moderate to severe asthma, hypertension, severe heart conditions, weakened immunity, severe obesity, diabetes, liver disease, and chronic kidney disease that requires dialysis. Two or more spells trouble. And now we know that active or remissioned invasive cancer, even prior cancer, pushes Covid-19 death rate way up.

Diabetes and even pre-diabetes remains especially detrimental with Covid-19 infection. "Momona", a cultural value for Polynesians and other groups, is instead a serious issue with Covid-19, and it's best to realize that and be extra safe.

So what is positive? Every day that passes means we know more about this virus, and how to avoid and treat it. Deadly viruses tend to get less potent, and there is now good evidence in hard-hit Italy, and one study here, indicating that it is happening in at least some areas with Covid-19. Vast resources are examining data, treatments, risk factors, and possible vaccines. Testing is widely available now, including antibody testing for prior infection. Hospitals are no longer overwhelmed. Hospitalizations and death rates are going down in many areas. Yes, information is changing so rapidly that what we knew, or thought we knew, three days ago is old hat! So second guessing prior belief or actions is to steer by hindsight, whereas being positive and forward-thinking helps your immune system. Being in enclosed spaces is the most critical factor for infection, rather than surfaces, so open doors and windows and use fans to bring in fresh air.

Here are some especially important links I urge you to read:

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/living-in-close-quarters.html?deliveryName=USCDC_2067-DM29601

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/high-risk-workers.html?deliveryName=USCDC_2067-DM29601

<https://www.nytimes.com/article/how-to-read-a-science-study-coronavirus.html>

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-05-cancer-coronavirus-dangerous.html>