



Korean American Medical Association

200 Sylvan Ave. #22, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632 USA

Tel: (201) 567-1434

info@kamaus.org / www.kamaus.org

April 1, 2020

Dear President Trump,

This urgent memo is written because of concerns for the survival and future of our country, the United States of America. As of this writing, the total confirmed case count of COVID-19 is over 200,000 and the death count over 4,000. Half of our population is under lockdown, and all economic activities are either severely curtailed or on hold. If the trend holds and the pandemic continues on for more than 6 months, our economy and national strength will suffer permanently, let alone countless lost lives and suffering. If these occur, the negative effects on the global geopolitical state and the military consequences will be grave.

What worries us most is that recommendations by medical leaders and authorities are making control of viral spread more difficult. Many medical experts and government authorities are telling the population Not To Wear Masks. This is a harmful message, and we will spell out why this is wrong. Listed below are common arguments from various popular sources against wearing masks in quotes. Each argument will be countered with an explanation on why the argument is faulty:

- (1) “Wearing masks by the population will not give protection against viral infection.”

Infected persons can either sneeze or cough producing aerosols of $<10\ \mu\text{m}$ and droplets of $>100\ \mu\text{m}$. Most COVID-19 viral infections occur from droplets which contain millions of virions (rather than aerosol) which can enter via the nasal or oral passageway of its next host. This is usually the first point of infection because of high expression of ACE2, which are more abundant in the lining of the nostril. A high concentration of ACE2 protein as a “lock protein” is necessary for the “spike protein” of COVID-19 virus (SARS-CoV-2) to latch onto in order for the virus to gain entry into the host cells.

Aerosols can reach the alveoli of the lung, but scant presence of ACE2 protein in alveoli of the lungs makes this to be an unlikely entry point of the virus.

For this reason, even cloth (such as cotton cloth material) masks will suffice with a filtration rate of 100% of Droplets (surgical mask 100%; N95 100% respectively). (For filtration of Aerosols: 67% by Cloth mask, 75% by surgical mask, 99% by N95)

[<https://medium.com/@Cancerwarrior/covid-19-why-we-should-all-wear-masks-there-is-new-scientific-rationale-280e08cee71>]

- (2) “There is no data supporting that wearing masks by a population will reduce spread of viral infection.”

First, lack of data supporting a hypothesis does not prove its counter-hypothesis.



Korean American Medical Association

200 Sylvan Ave. #22, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632 USA

Tel: (201) 567-1434

info@kamaus.org / www.kamaus.org

Second, it is hard to design a case-control study on this subject. It will be impossible to recruit volunteers for the study.

Third, there is now large-scale data supporting the opposing hypothesis (that is, wearing facial masks by a population leads to significant reduction of viral spread). Countries in which most of the population wore masks have shown a reduction in the rate of infection, such as South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, etc. Czech, Slovakia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina recently instituted mandatory wearing of masks in public, resulting in a rapid downward curve of the infection rate.

[https://youtu.be/qFmaSNP6_z4]

(3) “Laymen do not know how to wear masks properly.”

Wearing a mask is not a complex task like solving differential equations or calculus problems. A public campaign on the proper use of masks can easily educate the population/ the American people.

(4) “Wearing a mask will make a person touch the face and nose, increasing the chance of viral infection.”

The contrary is true. Most people will have a lower tendency to directly touch the nasal and oral pathways when a mask is on. Having a mask on will remind and keep most people from touching the face. This again can be tackled with public education.

(5) “Wearing masks will make other people feel uncomfortable.”

First, making someone feel uncomfortable is relatively insignificant compared to the lives that can be saved by having everyone wear masks.

Second, many of our patients expressed a sense of security in our office where all staff members wear masks at all times. They take comfort in knowing that we take infection control seriously.

Third, concern for social acceptance has no place in a war effort.

Fourth, what we perceive as social norm is something we decide and shape. It was ostracizing to wear a mask in public in Czech, but now it is ostracizing not to wear a mask in public after their national campaign.

[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jZtEX2-n2Hc>]

(6) “Advising the public to wear masks will create a shortage of masks for medical personal.”



Korean American Medical Association

200 Sylvan Ave. #22, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632 USA

Tel: (201) 567-1434

info@kamaus.org / www.kamaus.org

The U.S. federal government can spur many great manufacturing companies to produce masks in large quantities by utilizing the Defense Production Act. One billion masks will allot approximately 3 masks to each citizen in the U.S. for a day. This is much easier than mass producing planes and tanks in time of war and for a fraction of the cost.

In addition, we can make homemade masks in large quantities quickly. Citizens are already doing this, and instructions on how to make good high-quality masks are widely being distributed online on sites such as YouTube. One excellent example is:

<https://youtu.be/W6d3twpHwis>

- (7) “Surgical masks or non-N95 masks should be worn only by the infected, and N95 masks should be worn only by healthcare personnel when treating infected patients. The asymptomatic should not wear any mask.”

This is also illogical, because it has long been established that an asymptomatic person can be an infectious carrier of the COVID-19 virus (will designate this as person A for illustration). If person A happens to be in an aisle in a grocery store and coughs, and an uninfected person (person B) goes through the same aisle soon afterward, then the virus can spread completely unhindered to person B if both are not wearing masks.

On the other hand, if both wear masks, even homemade ones, person B will be protected. Wearing a simple mask will prevent person A from expelling infected droplets into the air and will prevent person B from inhaling the droplets into their system.

We, Korean American physicians in the US, are uniquely qualified to closely observe medical situations taking place in South Korea. Based on our analysis of the South Korean medical communities’ successful response to the Coronavirus pandemic, we are convinced that masks worn by most of the Korean people made a resounding difference in the nation’s response outcome. In the fight against this viral pandemic, targeted and prompt testing, isolation of the infected, tracking and testing of contacts of the infected, social distancing, quarantine and establishing barriers between potential hosts (i.e., the mandatory wearing of masks in public) are all important ways to reduce transmission of the disease from one to another. Out of these, the mandatory wearing of masks in public is highly important and this sets successful countries (as noted in section 2) apart from struggling countries in the fight against the pandemic.

We the Korean American Medical Association, representing more than 16,000 U.S. physicians of Korean heritage, strongly urge our medical leadership to change their recommendations to the American people regarding the wearing of masks in public ASAP. The U.S. should start mass production of masks ASAP at maximum effort. We should encourage production of homemade masks with proper instructions for citizens.

Medical leadership should lead a national campaign to have people wear masks correctly along with other measures.



Korean American Medical Association

200 Sylvan Ave. #22, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632 USA

Tel: (201) 567-1434

info@kamaus.org / www.kamaus.org

Fighting a war should not be left to the government alone. We need to mobilize the entire population in the war effort, but the government needs to lead and give guidance. **MASKS ON EVERYONE** should be the motto that our government uses to lead the American people in this war against virus.

Thank you for your dedication to our country.

God speed,

Brice B. Choi, M.D.

(Prior service) Lt Col, US Air Force, MC

Immediate Past Chairman of Board, KAMA (Korean American Medical Association)

With approval by

John H. Won, M.D.

Chairman of Board, KAMA

Mary E. Choi, M.D.

President, KAMA