Coronavirus: Are a Second Wave and Another Lockdown in Our Future?

By Alex Berezow, PhD — June 25, 2020

Do people acquire long-term immunity to coronavirus? Will there be a second wave? Will there be more lockdowns? Some recent news helps shed light on these questions.

Several months into the coronavirus pandemic, we still don't have a good understanding of SARS-CoV-2. The often contradictory information we get from scientists and public health officials reflects this. And because we can't easily predict how the virus is going to act, we can't easily predict how people and governments will react.

Still, like assembling a 10,000-piece jigsaw puzzle, we are slowly collecting bits and pieces of information and putting them into place. Hopefully, this will help us answer questions like: Do people acquire long-term immunity to coronavirus? Will there be a second wave? Will there be more lockdowns?

In that spirit, here is some relevant COVID-19 news and analysis from recent days. First, the good news.

1) While new research indicates that antibodies against the coronavirus may not be long-lasting (which obviously has negative implications for the development of vaccines and herd immunity.), there is another part of our immune system that may be lurking in the background, helping to keep the coronavirus at bay: Cell-mediated immunity. Though antibodies are the most "famous" part of
the immune system, there's another equally important part that involves T cells. As Derek Lowe explains [3], research here suggests that asymptomatic carriers of COVID-19 may have had a robust T cell response to the virus.

2) AstraZeneca [4] hopes to start shipping 400 million doses of its vaccine -- which is still being tested in clinical trials -- as soon as September. Altogether, it plans to ship two billion doses by early next year.

Now, the bad news.

**Coronavirus cases in the United States have not fallen as much as in the European Union**

Seven-day rolling average of new coronavirus cases, March 1 to June 18

3) A startling graph in the *Washington Post* shows that the number of new cases in the European Union is far, far lower than the number of new cases in the United States. A rolling seven-day average reveals 24K new cases in the U.S. compared to only 4K in the EU. This is why Americans are likely to be excluded [5] from traveling to Europe when the EU reopens.

4) Along similar lines, New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut have implemented a 14-day quarantine [6] for any individual who arrives from a state that is experiencing a surge in cases. Germany has reimplemented local lockdowns [7] following two outbreaks.

5) The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has warned [8] the global economy will shrink by nearly 5% this year, as the world faces "a crisis like no other" with "an uncertain recovery." It's for reasons such as this that some experts have claimed that the lockdown is costing more lives than the virus [9].
Conclusions

What conclusions can we draw? A second wave is all but inevitable [10]. (In the U.S., it's more like a prolonged first wave rather than a truly second wave.) Though our immune systems may be better off than we think, a vaccine likely won't be ready and distributed before the second wave comes roaring back in the fall. That means yet more lockdowns and travel restrictions, both of which will continue to harm the economy.

While I believe in the medium- to long-term that life will more or less return to normal [11], it is becoming increasingly clear that, in the short-term, we face a long, painful road to recovery.

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