

Celebrities and the coronavirus

Doctors are getting better at treating the coronavirus. For instance, they found that a generic steroid can save some people on ventilators and that a drug originally developed to treat

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Hepatitis C can speed up recovery times. While doctors have had some success, they have only been able to use existing drugs because medical researchers are still developing and testing drugs designed to treat the coronavirus. Medical experts do not know when these drugs will be ready, but when they are, doctors will probably become even more effective.

As new drugs become available, the virus will become less deadly, so we should all try to avoid or delay getting the virus as long as we can. As it stands now, the most effective ways to curtail the virus's spread are very low tech – we can social distance and wear face masks. By wearing a face mask in public, an infected person becomes five to six times less likely

to infect other people. If these two low-tech steps keep a typical person from infecting fewer than one other person, on average, then the virus will die out.

It would have been nice if political leaders encouraged behavior that would cause the infection rates to shrink. Unfortunately, President Trump has discouraged both social distancing and wearing face masks. By holding a political rally, Trump brought people together and surely enabled the virus to spread more widely. By refusing to wear a face mask, he has set an example that others follow and keeps the nation from effectively limiting the disease.

Trump likely discourages both social distancing and wearing face masks because doing so benefits him politically. His rallies make him seem popular, energize his base, and attempt to indicate that we do not live in dangerous times. By refusing to wear a face mask, Trump is trying to exhibit strength and that he does not need such protections. By signaling public safety and his toughness, Trump hopes to convince people he is the appropriate leader for these tough times.

While Trump may gain politically from discouraging social distancing and mask wearing, his actions will cost some Americans their lives. Hopefully, other opinion leaders can counteract Trump's message. I hope other public figures encourage people to wear face masks and to engage in social distancing. Hopefully, people will ignore Trump's example when they see celebrities giving them the opposite message. Celebrities can do a lot of good by making it seem cool or responsible to take these simple steps to reduce the spread of the virus.

If celebrities can convince people to take steps to curtail the spread of the virus, some people will avoid getting sick and others will delay when they are sick. People who avoid getting sick are clearly better off, but so are people who merely delay their infections. Just as doctors have become more effective at treating the virus in the last few months, doctors will know even more in the future, making it more likely that people who contract the virus in the coming months will survive.

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