



Are There Fatalities Due To Delayed Statewide Mandatory Mask Use Orders?

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My opinion

It is a Pandora's Box which Yehya et al [1] and Auger et al [2] have opened in the midst of global pandemic because although SARS-CoV-2 as a pathogen knows and follows no boundaries, local, regional and national policies may have created non-scientific boundaries with fractured global response becoming an obstacle to contain pandemic. Although Yehya et al [1] and Auger et al [2] focused on quantifying risk for fatalities secondary to delays in social distancing interventions (emergency declarations and school closures), this assessment is not complete until fatality risk of delays in statewide mandatory mask use orders has been investigated because social distancing is not complete without mask use. Although prevention of future deaths with universal mask use has been predicted [3], the medical literature should also document [4] number of lives already lost secondary to delays in universal mask use even if such quantification may counterproductively risk providing fodder for litigations by survivors of the deceased.

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The highly transmissible SARS-CoV-2 has forced population to tolerate masks for now despite their physiological intolerance to masks secondary to thermal stress of hot and humid in-mask microclimates [5-8]. Thus, uniform and consistent practice of mask use by populations may not be physiologically achievable despite statewide mandatory mask use orders; this is in contrast to population's inability to undo state-wide emergency declarations and school closures whose associations were investigated by Yehya et al [1] and Auger et al [2]. Additionally, the statewide orders heterogeneously exclude some public spaces from mandatory mask use further confusing population and delaying their acceptance of universal mask use. This inescapable heterogeneity in the actual universality of mask use may affect validity of quantifying COVID-19 mortality (if any) as associated with delays in statewide mandatory mask use orders. However, Yehya et al [1] and Auger et al [2] can consider investigating the association (if any) of all-cause excess mortality [9] with delays in statewide mandatory mask use orders because it may

not be an overestimation if all excess deaths in COVID-19 pandemic era are counted either as direct consequence of SARS-CoV-2 itself or as collateral damage secondary to fractured mitigation measures against pandemic. Therefore, while awaiting COVID-19 pandemic era's all-cause excess mortality getting permanently resolved with vaccines and therapeutics against SARS-CoV-2, humanity may have to live in the interim accepting and practicing universal mask use whenever and wherever there is a risk of airborne exposure by human contact while in public spaces or at homes [10].

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