

DIANE HARKEY



On the Bright Side

When a “Black Swan” event strikes, either by financial markets, natural disasters or a pandemic, such as COVID-19, the stock market goes wobbly, lenders pull back, super markets and Big Box retailers such as Costco and Target are jammed, schools close and life as we know it is interrupted – to say the least. This “super-flu” is serious, and we all know that now. Just when it will peak in our country is unknown, but the health professionals and officials are trying to “flatten the curve” of the spread of the virus, to try to prepare and ensure adequate health resources are available to those in need. Hence, the request to halt gatherings, prohibit travel from hot spots, and implement social distancing efforts. To temper the outbreak might lengthen the timeframe of the spread, but would allow for more preparedness and perhaps even a vaccine to prevent the illness for those now and in the future.

How long this interruption will last is also unknown – and uncertainty generates fear. But there are bright spots:

1. With a few caveats, we are coming together as a nation to ensure efforts to implement best practice strategies in coordination with national, state and local municipalities; Our Governor is leading the way by example being honest about the cooperation California is receiving from the President and his administration;
2. New research and development using government funds and private companies will develop testing, vaccines, medicines for treatment, not to mention funds for more training of healthcare personnel and construction of much needed emergency and acute care facilities to ensure those requiring hospitalization can get it;
3. We are breaking the logjam of regulations that impede progress on the medical side for all of the items in #2 above to proceed;
4. And, if we are smart, we are probably eating more meals at home, spending more time with people we live with, and developing a keener understanding of the freedoms we enjoy, how fragile life is, and how much that happens is unpredictable and beyond our control.

The Key: Isolate, Trace and Contain

And more testing is becoming available, thanks FDA's emergency authorization for COVID-19 tests kits by Roche, a pharmaceutical giant and Thermo Fisher, US scientific instrument maker. It's being reported that Roche can manufacture up to 3.5 million test kits per month, with Thermo Fisher to ship 1.5 million tests by this week (mid-March) with the ability to produce 5 million tests per month by early April.

Locally, Quest in San Juan Capistrano provides a test if ***requested from your healthcare provider***. Don't go into their labs. From Quest Website: "The Quest Diagnostics test for COVID-19 is a qualitative, molecular test to detect RNA from SARS-CoV-2, the virus which causes COVID-19. Our test was internally developed and validated according to CLIA requirements. The independent review of this validation by the FDA is pending. **This test does not require confirmation by CDC prior to reporting results.**" **Results are usually within 2 days. For updates check their link:**

<https://www.questdiagnostics.com/home/Covid-19/HCP/>

Other private companies and Universities are also engaged in testing and establishing available locations for doing so. Drive in testing has been reported as being available soon in many counties.

But the more test, the more cases of many who are experiencing only mild symptoms. So relax, and adopt perspective; most people will not even know they are infected, hence the need to distance, but not panic.

Biotech and Biomed Leading the Way

The resurgence of Biotech and Biomed industries making news is heartening. Having travelled statewide visiting companies, community colleges, universities as well as having worked with trade associations, I have seen California leading the way with hubs in San Diego, Orange, Los Angeles and San Francisco Counties where major industry leaders and venture capitalists work collegially with universities and start ups. Biotech and Biomed industries proliferate here and are the wave of the future for our state and the nation, not only for access, cures, vaccines, and devices that can make healthcare more available, more reliable and more affordable over time, but they also offer great careers for all levels of education from manufacturing to professional fields.

As reported in the OC Register, the US Department of Health and Human Services is awarding \$679,000 in federal funds to a company in Cypress, California, to develop a diagnostic test to detect the virus in just 1 hour. The Wall Street Journal has been a great source of information and in particular, a video on the modern method for creating vaccines. Vaccines of old required that some of the foreign “invader” be injected into the patient, so that an antigen (immunity) could be formed. The risks are inherent in the method of creation. But one of the marvels of biotech is that using Rapid Response Platforms using DNA/RNA coding, your body can create its own antigen, to recognize and fight off the virus (Messenger RNA produce antigen proteins). Amazing! Clinical trials are underway by Moderna, Inc. and if successful, a vaccine could be available in 18 months. The article and video may be found here: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/recruitment-begins-for-first-test-of-experimental-coronavirus-vaccine-11583358054>

Prestidigitation - or while you're not looking

While COVID-19 is and should be prominently featured on the world stage, we naturally ignore what is happening on the other stages, such as Hong Kong, Russia, North Korea and Iran. Not to mention the occurrences in our own state, such as taking over hotels to house the homeless (who, where and for how long are still TBD). And more taxes, to help create a “Homeless Housing Fund” a new bill AB 1905 (Chiu) would limit the amount of mortgage interest deduction on your state tax return to \$500,000 of indebtedness for married or \$375,000 for individual taxpayers (presently \$1 million to \$750,000 respectively) and eliminate the second residence tax deduction entirely.

Our state senate collectively has also been very busy promoting a package of bills that “address homelessness” consisting of more money with some good ideas, and some that I fear may require more staff to encourage more

homeless to our state through a package of generous benefits. For the list see: <https://focus.senate.ca.gov/homeless/proposal>.

In closing... Remain calm and carry on

We will get through this, we know because of what we have dealt with before (polio, measles, chickenpox, tuberculosis, etc) and the measures we are taking. Considering how large our country is, and the political environment we live in, our President and his administration have moved rapidly to ensure we postpone the contagion. Governors and local governments are also racing to meet the challenge facing us. The hope is that we will all look back upon this frightening time of the unknown with confidence in our ability to not only weather the storm but learn, create and move forward toward a better world.

Please try not to strip the grocery stores - we are not running out of or rationing food. I understand that you may fear that you could be quarantined, which is reasonable, but groceries can be delivered to your doorstep and water from the tap is still fine to drink; be reasonable. As for toilet paper (another hot commodity) use your judgment and don't hoard. We will make it through this, better than most nations because we are so diverse, free-thinking and talented, and I believe we will build a better and stronger community, state and nation because we will work together to meet the challenge.

Good reading while you are hanging around the house:

1. [The Viruses that shaped our DNA:](#)
2. [When Epidemics Wreaked Havoc in America:](#)
3. [Cypress Company Awarded Contract:](#)

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