Epsilon Theory

Don't Test, Don't Tell

February 27, 2020

I believe that a healthy society should not have only one voice.

Li Wenliang,* Wuhan *physician, born October 12, 1986, died February 7, 2020.

Last night, I received a Twitter DM that included screenshots of an email that went out to staff at the UC Davis Medical Center. After checking for authenticity, I posted the screenshots in a tweet of my own.

And that's when, as the kids would say, it blew up.

Coronavirus Patient and Precautions at UC Davis Medical Center

Today we learned a patient we are treating here at UC Davis Medical Center for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is being investigated by the CDC as possibly the first patient to have received the infection from exposure in the community.

This patient was transferred to us from another Northern California hospital on Wednesday, Feb 19. When the patient arrived, the patient had already been intubated, was on a ventilator, and given droplet protection orders because of an undiagnosed and suspected viral condition. Since the patient arrived with a suspected viral infection, our care teams have been taking the proper infection prevention (contact droplet) precautions during the patient's stay.

Upon admission, our team asked public health officials if this case could be COVID-19. We requested COVID-19 testing by the CDC, since neither Sacramento County nor CDPH is doing testing for coronavirus at this time. Since the patient did not fit the existing CDC criteria for COVID-19, a test was not immediately administered. UC Davis Health does not control the testing process.

On Sunday, the CDC ordered COVID-19 testing of the patient and the patient was put on airborne precautions and strict contact precautions, because of our concerns about the patient's condition. Today the CDC confirmed the patient's test was positive.

This is not the first COVID-19 patient we have treated, and because of the precautions we have had in place since this patient's arrival, we believe there has been minimal potential for exposure here at UC Davis Medical Center.

We are proud of our health care workers who have been working to care for this patient and are committed to saving this patient's life. Just as when a health care worker has a small chance of exposure to other illnesses, such as TB or pertussis, we are following standard CDC protocols for determination of exposure and surveillance. So, out of an abundance of caution, in order to assure the health and safety of our employees, we are asking a small number of employees to stay home and monitor their temperature. We are handling this in the same way we manage other diseases that require airborne precautions and monitoring. We are in constant communication with the state health department and the CDC and Sacramento County Public Health about the optimal management of this patient and possible employee exposures.

As we regularly handle patients with infectious diseases, we have robust infection control protocols in place to handle this patient and others with more frequently seen infectious diseases. In this case, we are dedicated to providing the best care possible for this patient and continuing to protect the health of our employees who care for them.

There are a number of informational resources, including a Q&A and background information on COVID-19 on The Insider and the UC Davis Health website.

David Lubarsky, M.D., M.B.A. Brad Simmons
Vice Chancellor of Human Health Sciences Interim CEO, Chief Operating Officer
CEO, UC Davis Health UC Davis Medical Center

I want to highlight a couple of quotes from this email.

> *Since the patient did not fit the existing CDC criteria for COVID-19, a test was not immediately administered. UC Davis Health does not control the testing process.*

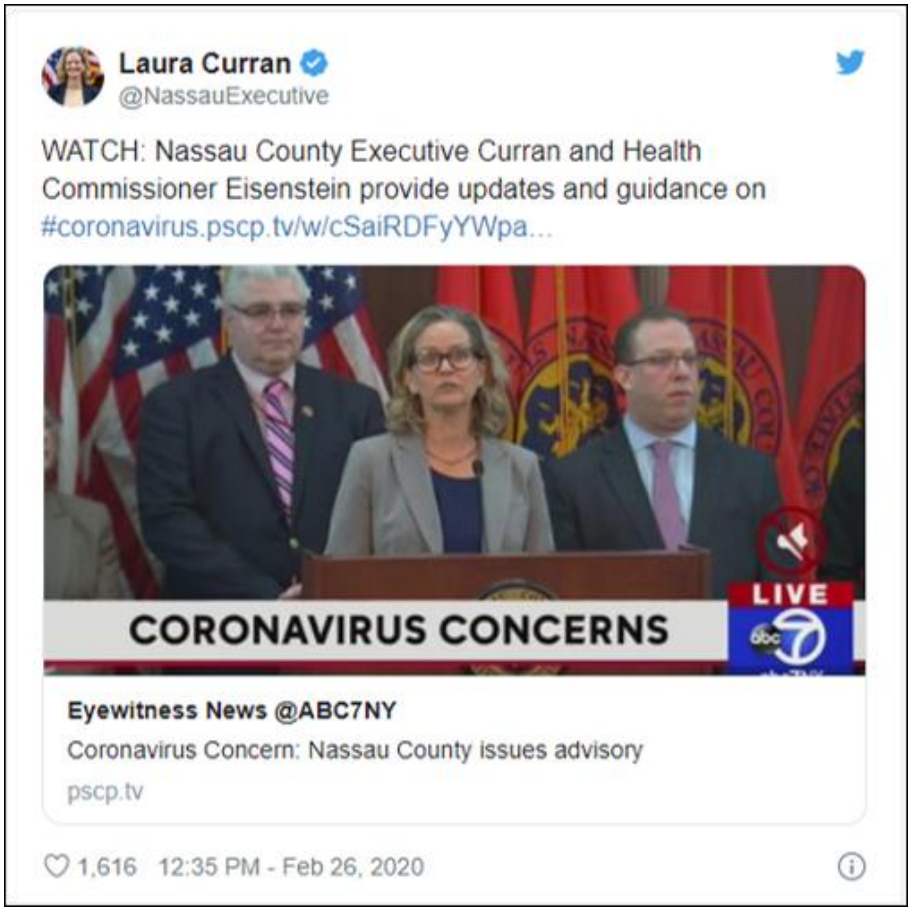
The facts here are pretty clear. Patient comes in from another hospital on Wednesday, Feb. 19 – *this is one week ago* – already intubated and on a ventilator, and the doctors at UC Davis – *who have treated other COVID-19 cases* – IMMEDIATELY suspect COVID-19.

But the CDC *refuses* to test for COVID-19.

Why? Because it didn't fit their "criteria" for testing. They didn't know *for sure* that the patient was in mainland China within the past 14 days, and they didn't know *for sure* that the patient was in close contact with another confirmed case, so BY DEFINITION this patient can't possibly have COVID-19. No test for you!

This is *"Don't Test, Don't Tell"* and it is the single most incompetent, corrupt public health policy of my lifetime.

And it's happening all over the country. Here, take a look at **yesterday's press conference from Nassau County, Long Island.**



Excruciating. They spend the first five minutes of the presser congratulating each other. Then the update: 83 people are in self-quarantine at home, where they are supposed to "check their temperature" daily. Don't have a thermometer? Not to worry! The Nassau County Health Commission will provide one for you!

Who are the 83 in self-quarantine? Why, they're everyone that Homeland Security says should be in self-quarantine, based on "current guidelines" of someone who was in mainland China within the past 14 days.

Has it been 15 days since your mainland China visit?

Have you been to Northern Italy in past 14 days?

Have you been to Iran in past 14 days?

Have you been to South Korea in past 14 days?

Well, no self-quarantine for you! You're fine!

And here's the kicker. Not only is there ZERO tracking or monitoring of anyone who has been swimming in the coronavirus stew of South Korea, Northern Italy and Iran, but let's say that you have in fact been to one of those areas recently and now you're feeling sick. You go to the doctor and you tell her the whole story. Both of you suspect it might be COVID-19. You're trying to do the right thing here. You call the county health authority. You call the state health authority. You call the CDC. And then you learn the awful truth of *Don't Test, Don't Tell.*

It's not that testing is not available.

It's that testing is not ALLOWED.

I'm not panicked. I am perfectly calm.

But I am really, really pissed off.

Because here's the other quote from the UC Davis email that I'd like you to pay close attention to:

> *When the patient arrived [Wednesday], the patient had already been intubated, was on a ventilator, and **given droplet protection orders** because of an undiagnosed and suspected viral condition. … On Sunday, the CDC ordered COVID-19 testing of the patient and the patient was **put on airborne precautions** and strict contact precautions.*

Translation: for four days, every healthcare professional treating this patient at UC Davis was exposed to airborne transmission of COVID-19. And so was every healthcare professional at the hospital *before* UC Davis. **Because the CDC refused to test this patient for COVID-19 in a timely manner, the doctors and nurses and technicians caring for this patient were put at risk.**

Sure enough:

> *We are asking a small number of employees to stay home and monitor their temperature.*

This is the part of the story that we must yell at the top of our lungs.

Don't Test, Don't Tell is not just hiding the true extent of COVID-19 cases in the United States.

Don't Test, Don't Tell is not just perpetuating the politically corrupt "*Yay, Containment!*" narrative of this White House.

***Don't Test, Don't Tell* is endangering the lives of our doctors and nurses.**

Just like in China.

Just like in Wuhan.

> ***A city falls when its healthcare system is overwhelmed.*** *A city falls when its national government fails to prepare and support its doctors and nurses. A city falls when its government is more concerned with maintaining some bullshit narrative of "Yay, Calm and Competent Control!" than in doing what is politically embarrassing but socially necessary.*
>
> *That's EXACTLY what happened in Wuhan. More than 30% of doctors and nurses in Wuhan themselves fell victim to COVID-19, so that the healthcare system stopped being a source of healing, but became a source of infection. At which point the Chinese government effectively abandoned the city, shut it off from the rest of the country, placed more than 9 million people under house arrest, and allowed the disease to essentially burn itself out.*
>
> *And so Wuhan fell.*
>
> ***The disaster that befell the citizens of Wuhan and so many other cities throughout China is not primarily a virus. The disaster is having a political regime that cares more about maintaining a self-serving narrative of control than it cares about saving the lives of its citizens.***
>
> *We must prevent that from happening here. From happening anywhere. Yes, containment has failed. But that does NOT mean the war is lost. We can absolutely do better – SO MUCH BETTER – for our citizens than China did for theirs.*

The Fall of Wuhan

Containment has failed. And so now we must fight. That means doing everything possible to bolster our healthcare systems BEFORE the need overwhelms the capacity. … **Continue reading**

The CDC's *Don't Test, Don't Tell* policy came crashing down last night. So did Trump's *"buh, buh the flu"* and *"Yay, Containment!"* narratives.

Now let's get to work preparing for the fight to come.

Not in panic. Not in fear. But with resolve, sacrifice and righteous anger for those who would use us instrumentally for their own political ends.

Clear eyes. Full hearts. Can't lose.

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