

Evaluating Successful Measures to Implement "Living with COVID-19" Scheme

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Introduction

On the 11th of March in 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared COVID-19 to be characterized as a pandemic. The first outbreak of the infectious virus began with the establishment of lockdown protocols and various policies and mandates. Although many forces around the globe attempted to stop the virus, the population density of Earth and people constantly moving to different places made this a tremendously difficult task. After two years of combatting COVID-19, some nations worldwide are gearing their focus away from trying to end the virus, but more towards carrying out daily life with the virus, also known as "Living with COVID-19".

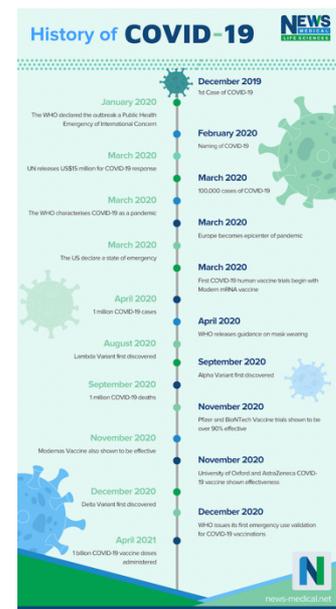
Countries that are starting to "Live with COVID-19" are stating that they will no longer fight to get rid of the virus, but to discover means of living life with it. People will slowly return to their life before the virus had emerged, such as traveling without quarantines, reopening shopping malls, and removing the mask mandates (the policies of needing to wear masks outside). In addition, numerous articles can be found online advocating the implementation of "Living with COVID-19". However, this scheme can cause more harm than good if not carried out properly. Therefore, urgent solutions must be established to implement the "Living with COVID-19" scheme effectively.

History

The first reported case of the novel human coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) came from Wuhan, China, in December of 2019, when the city informed the WHO of cases of pneumonia with unknown cause. In January of 2020, the Chinese authorities discovered a novel coronavirus as the cause of these cases, temporarily named 2019-nCoV. On the 30th of January in 2020, the WHO announced that the virus was rapidly spreading and that the outbreak would be considered a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

One month after the WHO officially declared COVID-19 as a pandemic, which marked the fifth documented pandemic since the flu pandemic in 1918, COVID-19 reached one million cases in April of 2020. By September, there were 1 million COVID-19 deaths, and effective vaccines such as Moderna and Pfizer started to develop and be put on sale.

All nations in the world have been affected at different degrees by this virus. Although COVID-19 is not a deadly virus, its



A brief history of COVID-19 from December 2019 to April 2021

infectious nature still caused countless people to die. In the final months of 2021 and the early months of 2022, nations such as Singapore, England, Germany, Spain, Ireland, and the United Kingdom have voiced that society needs to start formulating ways of living with COVID-19, and some countries have already started implementing solutions to gear their focus towards this scheme.

Background

The notion of living with COVID-19 is very controversial. Some countries have already begun to incorporate this scheme into the daily lives of residents, such as shopping malls being open in Singapore and vaccinated German citizens being able to travel without quarantines. Certain governments from Asia, Europe, and the United States are starting to “learn to live with the virus”.

On the other hand, some believe that it is too risky to let residents return to daily rhythms as if the virus did not happen. Some scientists warn that even More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs) are still vulnerable to the virus, as variants like the Delta variant and Omicron are still emerging.

Some political leaders claim that COVID-19 should be considered an endemic disease, such as Denmark, which announced that COVID-19 would no longer be seen as dangerous to society, along with messages from Spain and the United Kingdom stressing the need for the world to learn to live with the virus.

However, officials from WHO have claimed that it may be too early to treat COVID-19 as an endemic because the evolution of the virus is still unpredictable. These examples show that there have recently been numerous claims on how COVID-19 should be approached as a disease.

(Places of High Concern) Problems Raised

Protests in Ottawa

On the first day of February in 2022, CNN News reported citizens of Canada in Ottawa protesting COVID-19 mandates. Thousands of people and numerous cars and massive trucks were lined up on the streets, and some citizens were even camped out near the Parliament. The crowd refused to leave until the government has lifted all the COVID-19 mandates such as the mask and vaccine mandates, and until life returns to pre-pandemic-normal. They demanded freedom of residents in the country, and that medical choices such as vaccination should be a personal choice.

The citizens have been lined up for days near the borderline of Canada and the United States, blocking an important supply chain. Some had even placed hate symbols and committed vandalism and harassment throughout the country. Justin Trudeau, the Prime Minister of Canada,



Citizens of France in Paris, protesting against a new law about vaccine passes

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declared that he is “not intimidated” and “will not cave in” to the citizens behaving this way.

Protests in France

After the French government introduced a new COVID-19 pass, residents in France were outraged and took part in numerous protests. According to French authorities, more than 105,000 citizens have participated in protests regarding the coronavirus pass, and about 18,000 people attended the protest in Paris, the capital of France. The new law would remove the option of showing a negative COVID-19 test to attend public venues. Instead, citizens will need to be fully vaccinated to have access to public areas, including bars and restaurants. The government stated that the new law would come to effect from January 15th, 2022, but many residents criticized the government for stealing their freedom and treating people unequally. Despite the violent protests carried out by passionate citizens, the opposition to this new measure is not widespread. In fact, a recent survey shows that many residents back the vaccine pass. This created much controversy among citizens and tension with the government in France.

Treating COVID-19 as an Endemic Disease

Some nations have declared that they will start treating COVID-19 as an endemic disease by not categorizing it as a dangerous virus and learning to live with it while returning to pre-pandemic conditions. However, scientists and officials from the WHO have voiced that it may be too hurried to treat a pandemic as an endemic disease and stressed that the virus is very unpredictable. With the virus evolving and spreading rapidly, they claim, it is too early to view COVID-19 as an endemic.

The Stances of the P5 Nations

United States of America

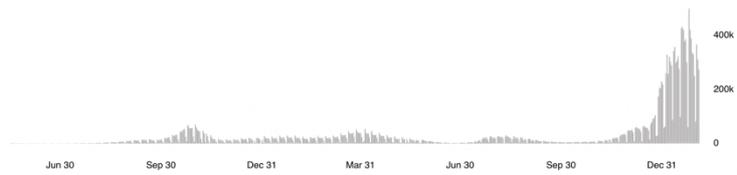
Although the USA is one of the countries with the most COVID-19 cases daily, the nation is beginning to transition into living with the virus as a “manageable disease”, as Anthony Fauci stated on January 11th, 2022. As the “top US scientist” and President Joe Biden’s chief medical advisor, Fauci declared that it was unrealistic to fully eradicate COVID-19 and its other variants because of their extraordinary transmissibility. He hopes that the country will soon enter a phase where enough protection and drugs are available to swiftly treat infected citizens. However, there is much controversy among the citizens on this topic.

United Kingdom

The UK, much like the USA, is also implementing the “Living with COVID-19” scheme. It is relaxing restrictions and mandates and encouraging residents to “live with COVID”, recognizing the possibility of the virus eventually becoming an endemic disease. The country has few vaccine mandates, no COVID-testing requirements for inbound travelers to England, and has even removed policies requiring face masks and social distancing, only reinstating these rules when the Omicron variant first appeared. Again, this is a controversial topic that citizens think differently upon.

France

France's daily COVID-19 cases were not overwhelming compared to other nations until Omicron first appeared in December of 2021. As shown in the graph on the right, cases started surging up until France reached a record of more than 500,000 new



France's COVID-19 cases from June 30, 2020, to January 31, 2022

cases on January 26th, 2022. Because of the sudden rise of cases, the French government created strict policies and mandates to prevent further spread of the virus in the population, such as the establishment of a curfew, a lockdown exit plan consisting of 4 steps, and health passes and vaccinal passes to facilitate border crossings and to access certain activities, respectively. As there are still countless cases daily, France has no intention of relaxing these laws.

China

Known for its strict COVID-policies and month-long (or even longer) quarantines, China is moving towards zero-COVID or completely eradicating the virus from the country. To accomplish this goal, the government has taken measures such as locking down certain residential blocks if it has been affected by the virus in any way and establishing tight social restrictions. Because of these policies, China has surprisingly few cases compared to its dense population, and the government is continuing to create measures to completely remove COVID-19 from the nation.

Russian Federation

Unlike the other P5 nations, Russia does not have a firm opinion (or at least they do not show it) on how COVID-19 should be approached upon. The country still has measures to prevent the virus from spreading. The government has recently relaxed these policies, only to re-introduce them after the arrival of Omicron.

International Actions

England Lifts Most Virus Restrictions

In July of 2021, the Prime Minister of England, Boris Johnson, announced in a news conference that he mostly wanted to leave it to the citizens' decisions on whether to wear masks in confined spaces such as subways and buses, apart from some transportation authorities still requiring masks worn when using their service. Although this announcement drew much controversy among local officials and scientists, Johnson did not recant and said that Britain must learn to live with COVID-19 by allowing residents to choose and manage the risks.



Citizens of England outdoors without wearing masks

The government of England has not only relaxed the mask mandate, but they have eliminated virtually all COVID-19 restrictions despite the rise of the Delta variant. Public places such as restaurants and nightclubs started to reopen, and students do not have to wear masks in

school. Furthermore, residents do not need passports for nightclubs or other events, and legal requirements for self-isolation are not required. Because the mandates and policies are relaxed or even removed, citizens of England have more freedom of choice.

Relaxation of Restrictions in Ireland

Although England may have taken the most drastic ~~measures in~~ lifting restrictions, Ireland has also removed specific COVID-19 policies.

From 6 A.M. on the 22nd of January 2022, the government allows pubs and restaurants to return to usual opening times, access to hospitality or indoor activities without vaccination or recovery certificates, and social distancing policies to be relaxed. The remaining restrictions include citizens needing to wear masks, vaccination or recovery certificates being needed for international travel, and self-isolation being required for residents who have symptoms of COVID-19. Although Ireland did not relax all restrictions, it has still taken measures to gear towards “Living with COVID-19” and provide citizens with more freedom.

Possible Solutions

As the “Living with COVID-19” scheme is very controversial among the nations, solutions that are to be implemented must be thoroughly reviewed in every aspect and be agreed upon beforehand.

The first step that can be taken is organizing a formal meeting with delegates from numerous countries where each delegate presents their stance on the current pandemic and debates about how the virus should be viewed and approached. Because each country’s situation differs, such as China with an average of less than 50 cases daily and the United States with an average of more than 300,000 cases daily, it is not odd for solutions implemented in each nation to be distinctive. This also means that some countries may be better off without implementing the “Living with COVID-19” scheme. Through this meeting, countries may better understand each other’s stance and what measures to take in their nation.

To successfully implement this scheme, some conditions the solutions may need to meet include the following:

1. Because “Living with COVID-19” is controversial among citizens themselves ~~as well~~, measures taken should not directly harm those who do not want the scheme to be implemented.
2. Measures taken should be carefully analyzed and confirmed to be suitable for the specific country. Aspects to be analyzed include the country’s average COVID-19 cases, average COVID-19 deaths, and the type of government.
3. Measures must be analyzed and/or confirmed by certified and reliable organizations such as the WHO.

Glossary

Epidemic: A disease that affects a large number of people within a community, population, or region

Pandemic: An epidemic that is prevalent throughout multiple countries, continents, or the entire

world

Endemic: Describes something natural to, native to, confined to, or widespread within a place or population of people. For example, malaria is *endemic* to tropical regions.

Omicron: A variant of the coronavirus (variant B.1.1.529). This variant is more transmissible than the coronavirus and the Delta variant. Those infected with Omicron show symptoms similar to previous variants but causes less severe disease than prior variants.

Delta Variant: A variant of the coronavirus. This variant is highly contagious (more than twice as contagious as other variants), and some data suggest that this variant may cause severe illness in unvaccinated people.

Timeline

December 2019 – The 1st case of COVID-19 is reported in Wuhan, China

March 2020 – The WHO declares COVID-19 as a pandemic

April 2020– The world reaches a total of 1 million COVID-19 cases

August 2020 – The Lambada Variant is first discovered

December 2020 – The Delta Variant is first discovered

July 2021 – Boris Johnson announces that England will start to relax COVID-19 mandates and policies

January 2022 – Ireland relaxes COVID-19 mandates by allowing public places such as restaurants to open at their usual times, etcetera

February 2022 – CNN News reports about protests happening in Ottawa, Canada, due to the COVID-19 policies and mandates

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