Health Policy and the Pandemic: Lessons from History

Mical Raz, MD, PhD, MSHP
Charles E. and Dale L. Phelps Professor in Public Policy and Health,
Associate Professor of History and Medicine
University of Rochester
Employer Sponsored Health Insurance
How Americans Access Health Insurance and why it Matters
Figure 1:
Health Insurance Coverage Before and After Job Loss Among People in a Family Experiencing Job Loss as of May 2, 2020

Health Coverage Before Job Loss

- Medicaid: 17%
- Uninsured: 9%
- Medicare or Military: 6%
- Direct Purchase: 7%
- Employer-Sponsored Insurance (ESI): 61%

Total = 78 million

Coverage Among ESI Group After Job Loss

- Retain Other Coverage: 1.6M
- Retain ESI: 19.2M
- Newly Uninsured Due to ESI Loss: 26.8M

Notes: "Retain Other Coverage" refers to individuals holding multiple sources of coverage prior to family job loss. "Retain ESI" refers to individuals in families with multiple workers accessing ESI through separate employment-based policies. Source: KFF. Job Losses occurred March 1st through May 2nd, 2020. See Methods for more details.
Making the Invisible Visible

• Chronic disease, health disparities, poverty
“US is a population with significant unhealthy comorbidities that do make many individuals in our communities, in particular African American, minority communities particularly at risk here because of significant underlying disease health disparities and disease comorbidities -- and that is an unfortunate legacy in our health care system that we certainly do need to address,”
“If we have hypertension, if we have diabetes, we present with greater risk of severe complications”
CHRONIC DISEASES IN AMERICA

6 IN 10
Adults in the US have a chronic disease

4 IN 10
Adults in the US have two or more

THE LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH AND DISABILITY
and Leading Drivers of the Nation's $3.5 Trillion in Annual Health Care Costs

HEART DISEASE  CANCER  CHRONIC LUNG DISEASE  STROKE  ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE  DIABETES  CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE
A preview from Georgia about how America might reemerge from the coronavirus: Eating, drinking, touching and throwing caution to the wind

“I’m getting my nails done tomorrow — screw it,” said a nurse drinking a glass of wine on a bench after work, as the order of the morning was collapsing into the results of a thousand individual decisions.

On the sprawling green plaza, people began gathering elbow-to-elbow on blankets and lawn chairs, opening beers and bottles of wine.

“I think you have to live life,” said Jeff Lampel, taking a sip of beer.

“When you start seeing where the cases are coming from and the demographics — I’m not worried,” agreed his friend Scott Friedel.

“I know what people are going to say — ‘Those selfish idiots are killing our old people!’ ” said Lampel.

“How do you give up a day like this — really, how?” Friedel said, enjoying the last rays of sun as the music kept playing and the crowds kept coming.
Big problems – but sometimes simpler solutions
How Earlier Control Measures Could Have Saved Lives

Number of reported deaths by May 3: 65,307

Estimated deaths if social distancing started...
- ...one week earlier than it did in March: 29,410
- ...two weeks earlier: 11,253

By Wenyi Cai - Source: "Differential Effects of Intervention Timing on COVID-19 Spread in the United States," by Sen Pei, Sasiqiran Kendula and Jeffrey Shaman, Columbia University
