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Drastic times, drastic measures, but hope springs eternal



The COVID-19 virus has brought havoc to the world. Ensure you know what to do if you think you may have caught the virus, and how to bring peace to your troubled mind.

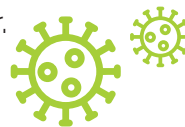
By Terry Owen

These are extraordinary times, unprecedented in modern history.

The COVID-19 virus has spread like wildfire throughout the world, causing a global pandemic and seeing governments most everywhere imposing draconian safeguarding conditions upon those countries' citizens. This is a difficult editorial for me to write as I try to placate those among La Vie Care's target audience, the elderly, who are known to be the virus' primary target.

However, I will try my best to reassure those situated within the borders of La Vie Care, that we will do whatever it takes to keep the virus at bay and to continue to care for those with dignity and respect.

We know you are scared. It is difficult not to be. It is very important, though, that you do not panic. While there is no vaccine available, medical trials are underway in various parts of the world aiming to get a vaccine available as soon as possible. The fact is, though, that with all the testing that must be done, it is unlikely that such a vaccine would be available before next year.



Medical Trials

There are also medical trials being undertaken with various drug therapy, and there are increasing promising results. Some of these trials include the retroviral medications that are being used to treat HIV patients – and that have proven such a great success in that population. That is just one of the avenues that is being explored. As I write this, stories of researchers everywhere trying to come up with answers abound on news pages.

Hope springs eternal. That's exactly the kind of hope I would like you to have. I know that it's difficult, and all the crazy things seemed to have happened so quickly that we've hardly even had time to be surprised! The thing is to strengthen your resolve that you will try your utmost to be positive. If you are exercising, carry on exercising. If that means just walking around the grounds, carry on doing that. Eat the best you can and get enough sleep. That's the way to strengthen the immune system. Unfortunately, there's no magic tablet you can take that will do that for you.

If you're wondering why this virus seems to be targeting the elderly, it's because as you age the immune system becomes weaker. That's why I suggested the mind exercises as well as some physical exercise. What's more, it's the respiratory system that is affected, and many residents of retirement care centres in the US who have had problems in that area have succumbed to the virus. If you have pneumonia or any respiratory illness, make sure that you talk to the doctor about that and you will get antibiotics and other treatment that should clear that up.

Golden Rules

Remember the golden rules – wash hands thoroughly with soap and use hand sanitiser if you are touching things outside of your room or cottage. If you sneeze, make sure you do that into a bent arm, and not your hand! Do not hug or kiss anyone, not even the closest members of your family. You never know if they have contracted the virus or not as they could be showing no symptoms, and everything appears fine. This is now mandatory virtually among anyone of any age and anywhere in the world.

In the US and the UK, they have imposed drastic measures regarding retirement and frail care centres. No visitors are allowed at all for three months. The management at the centres have organised that anything that is needed by their residents is communicated to them, and they will organise that items are bought and delivered to the centres. If people are living alone, they must impose self-isolation and healthcare workers will drop off food and other necessary items outside the door, where parcels can then be picked up and taken inside. No contact is allowed between the resident and the healthcare provider, or anyone else.

For your safety

These measures do seem excessive, but it has been stressed that is for the safety of the elderly patients. It is by contact that the virus is transmitted, so authorities are trying to cut down as much as possible on this. In Europe, the US and the UK, all theatres and cinemas have closed until mid-April when the situation will be re-assessed. Sporting events have all been cancelled.

Many of the European Union and other countries are in "lockdown" and have closed their borders. The residents of those countries may go out to buy food in an hour that it allowed and for the rest of the time they must abide by self-isolating measures. Even when people wait to go into a supermarket, or are at a cash till, they must stand a couple of metres apart. This has been termed as "self-distancing". Other than during the hour, no-one can leave their residencies. All these measures are strictly controlled and anyone in violation of the rules is fined and in certain instances jailed. Police and the army have constant patrols throughout the cities.



That is the severity that authorities are viewing this virus. The South African authorities are also taking a strict approach, and have virtually closed our borders by not allowing foreigners in. Visas will not be issued, and in instances where they have granted for future travel, they have had them cancelled. They have also shut the schools, and universities and colleges have taken it upon themselves to do the same. Anyone that is coming home from any of the “hot” countries abroad, will have to spend 14 days in quarantine. These measures will all be reviewed after a certain time.

So, everyone has been affected and life as we know it has changed so much. Our former lives hardly seem recognisable!

Symptoms of viral disease

If you, meanwhile, do show any symptoms of COVID-19 – which are a fever, a new and continuous dry cough and respiratory difficulties – you can call the doctor and you may be hospitalised in a quarantined area, or be isolated at home while receiving treatment. The main form of treatment will be powerful antibiotics and the use of a ventilator for any respiratory distress.

It is essential that if you think you may have contracted the virus to get hold of a doctor as soon as possible. Speed really is of the essence here!

It really seems very unfair to be placing you in isolation or limiting your contact with friends and loved ones, especially when you are most vulnerable, when you are lonely and afraid, but remember, these measures are there to protect you.

The families and friends of residents can also see to it that loved ones become computer literate! This is essential at a time like this. If he or she doesn't have a device, get a computer and a wi-fi system. Most areas are now wired with fibre, so it will be easy to connect. Show the person the ropes on basic functions like e-mail and Facebook. It's not rocket science and it will help you greatly in a time when isolation is the name of the game. Just ensure that whoever comes in contact with you, washes their hands thoroughly, is wearing a mask, sanitises the keyboard and your mouse and observes all the outbreak protocols – no physical contact!

I trust that this has instilled some confidence in you. Just remember, you are very precious, and we don't want you taking any risks!

I will be providing news and views regularly on COVID-19, so continue to visit this blog.

