

An Anguished Cry From the NHS Front Line: Coronavirus Is About to Explode Among Medical Staff  
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By Ambrose Evans-Pritchard

(Telegraph) -- Like many other Telegraph journalists, I have received a number of emails from well-informed doctors and medical staff working at the front of the NHS. They are in despair.

They are alarmed by the failure of the Government to take more drastic action to fight Covid-19. They are stunned that this country seems to have opted for capitulation at a time when best practice leaders in East Asia - and I don't mean China - have managed to contain the virus through use of technology, and to do so without massive economic and social disruption.

These medics are not reflexive ideological enemies of the Tories or blow-hard Twitterati. They are Telegraph readers who fear that a terrible mistake is being made and that the country is heading for a catastrophe - using that loaded term correctly - unless policy is changed immediately.

They are furious that NHS staff are not being tested to see if they have contracted the disease (or, later, to see if they have antibodies to the virus and are therefore no longer at risk), and why they are being made to work in the dark. They want to know why this is not being done urgently and comprehensively, as a matter of general policy. Other countries have shown that such testing is de rigueur.

They are angry about the Government's dalliance with herd immunity, a doctrine developed in the context of vaccine policy in populations losing immunity.

It strikes them as preposterous that you could achieve anything close to the threshold level of immunity - ultimately 60pc - over the six month window of time available to us before the second (more dangerous?) wave hits in the autumn.

The explosive rise in cases - with 13pc needing intensive care in the Italian region of Lombardy - would smash the system.

As a sample, I offer extracts from an email received on Sunday from consultant cardiologist at a top British hospital, with high-powered credentials, who is working in the front line.

His Whatsapp group of 10 fellow doctors has a Wuhan sense of frustration about it. Things are going horribly wrong. Covid-19 is taking off among NHS staff.

“One of them seems to probably have Covid, as has multiple symptoms. Two of them have personally treated a patient with Covid before the patient was diagnosed, eg with no protective measures in place. It is clear that there are certainly multiple cases amongst staff and patients in every NHS hospital today, and they are actively spreading, with nothing stopping them.

"One of the 10 is in his 50s, and has somewhat restricted lung capacity because of an orthopaedic problem – he spent this weekend making a will and putting his affairs in order. He had realised that with the current NHS leadership, there was basically nothing he could do to avoid catching it in coming days. Crunching the statistics, he realised that several consultants in the hospital will probably die.

“We have received no advice at all to take any measures to reduce spread in the hospital. Where the South Koreans were attending hospital in full hazmat suits, I will be arriving in my suit and tie tomorrow with nothing to prevent me catching it, and working in an operating theatre that a Covid patient was in on Friday, nobody aware that he had it, and the staff members I will be working with, will all have been in contact with that patient.

“So, the NHS is just about to explode in terms of absences, simultaneously with the patient explosion. All entirely predictable”

The doctor said the theory of herd immunity in this context borders on lunacy. It stretches the NHS to breaking point.

“Just 0.1pc of the population catching it is enough to overwhelm a Western healthcare system. We have had that fully demonstrated in Italy. Not only are cases of Covid dying unnecessarily in large numbers for want of quite simple healthcare interventions, but in addition virtually all normal healthcare provision has had to stop. Irrespective of these theories about herd immunity, we

are today at a point where we are quite probably unable to prevent an Italian situation, even if we applied maximum measures now.”

“The idea that you can allow the disease, which is as transmissible as flu, to be rampant in the population, while effectively protecting the elderly (who often need care from the young) ‘cocooned’ from the other 80pc, is obviously ludicrous.”

“We will be seen by other countries that are taking the opposite approach as Coronavirus Island, and presumably they would prevent all transit to, from, or through the UK, which would have a much larger and longer lasting effect on our economy than the temporary restrictions required for a quarantine approach.”

“In short, the government is taking a massive gamble with the population’s lives, the very opposite of the precautionary principle. And a gamble that is also certain to fail.”

No further comment.

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