

## Can we Control the Coronavirus Pandemic after the Severe Confinement and Social Distancing Measures?

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It seems that these days, as an English saying says, everyone talks about the weather but nobody does anything for it. That is the situation here in Colombia where despite the use of masks and washing hands with soap and water, the expected effect has not been achieved. Unfortunately, we fell into the grave error of believing that the antibacterial gels eliminate the coronavirus but as the name implies, these gels were formulated to kill bacteria not to kill any kind of virus. In addition, these gels contain less than 40% of alcohol which is contradiction to the WHO recommendation that specify the use of 70% ethyl alcohol and hypochlorite 0.5% to disinfect common surfaces. As the official propaganda says, the solution of the problem is in our hands but this is a figurative proposal so it is necessary to transform it into a real and effective measure.

I firmly believe that the root of the problem is that we have not caught the radish for the leaves; this is to say that the campaigns that have been carried out in Colombia are poorly focused. For example, we all know that all the cases that have been presented in Colombia and other South American countries have entered through the international airports. It is for this reason that we should focus on eliminating the possibility that those people transmit the disease through their hands and the simplest and most effective way would be to sterilize their hands as soon as they arrive at airports. The first measure would be to have a person in charge of sterilizing the hands of the passengers and crew of the plane using a spray gun provided with antiseptic alcohol. After this, one can proceed to take the temperature and follow the immigration and customs protocols. People with symptoms or not should be quarantined for 15 days in a hotel assigned for that purpose.

The rest of the population should be subjected to social distancing as much as possibly either on the streets or at work but always using face masks properly fit. All of these measures should be mandatory for all establishments, public and private, across the nation. For example, at airports, in the land transportation centers, shopping centers, supermarkets, hospital, clinics, banks, office buildings neighborhood stores, school, theaters, churches, etc. The important thing is that in all cases a DOBLE STERILIZATION of hands should be implemented by using antiseptic alcohol both at the entrance and at the exit of those places. These measures would not paralyze work or commercial activities and the productivity could continue its normal rhythm without resorting to severe economic measures or confinement of the population. This containment plan could be implemented without major difficulties in all the cities and towns of the country with the collaboration of all mayors.

In addition to these measures, people should carry a small atomizer of alcohol, similar to those used in cleaning eyeglass lenses, in their pockets in order to use them at any time or place. For example, instead of greeting each other with a handshake, friends should take advantage of the occasion to offer a sprinkling of the hands as a sign of friendship.

One of the great advantages of sterilizing hands with alcohol is that it can be used at any place thus avoiding long lines in public places or shopping malls. For instance, it would be physically impossible to sterilize the hands of all people who are going to take a bus or a train at a public station using soap and water wash. In this case, a series of sinks would have to be built both at the entrance and exit of stations.

Also, the alcohol spray takes only 3 seconds which contrasts with hand washing that takes 30 seconds or more. Furthermore, hand washing requires the use of disposable towels which would increase the cost and could complicate the waste problem. Other consideration is that the complete implementation of hand washing could create a shortage of drinking water which would affect many localities.

In conclusion, we have to assume that all persons are carriers of the coronavirus and that the only way to disrupt the chain of transmission is to implant a universal system of hand sterilization with antiseptic alcohol no matter what the unreliable tests may say. We should remember that these these tests are not 100% accurate because they give a great number of false negative and false positive results.

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