

## **COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Pandemic - Realistic Expectations**

**March 28, 2020.** I continue to view the COVID-19 pandemic from a personal perspective of an 81 year old male with a heart condition, someone who is deemed to be most vulnerable to fatal consequences if infected.

My wife and I are strictly following all of the guidelines for sheltering-in-place and we have become obsessed with cleanliness. In a matter of a week I have become a total germaphobe and have come to accept the probability that this new reclusive lifestyle might be permanent for a long time; a year or more until a vaccine is widely-available.

The projection for the peak of infections in the United States is now pegged at mid-April (two weeks) but the declining backside of the curve is going to extend for many months. During the next few months more required protective equipment and ventilators will become available, but the ranks of attending medical personnel and hospitals will increasingly feel the strain. At some point doctors and nurses are going to be forced to make the tough priority decision of who to care for? The most logical determinant will become what patients are most likely to survive? The survival rates for elderly citizens with health issues is not good.

In a few months the pandemic will be in decline and pressures from the economy and the general populace will result in a shift in priorities. People will be sent back to work and all types of businesses, restaurants and recreational facilities will be reopened. It will be back to business as usual but the virus won't be totally gone. Caseloads for doctors and hospitals will be down and younger will be able to overcome infections, but the general population will also discard the practices, such as social distancing, which have helped slow the spread. The bottom line is that the elderly with health issues will be forced to live in a world with diminished protections, even though the virus is not completely gone. You may think these predictions are too pessimistic but if you could walk in the shoes of an elderly citizen, you probably have a different opinion. For us the prediction is realistic.

Going forward our personal priority is going to be to continue to do everything possible to avoid infection. That will mean self-imposed restrictions on our lifestyle and daily activities. My wife and I have enjoyed the Florida lifestyle, warm weather, watching boats go by on the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW), and partaking daily in outdoor activities such as walking, jogging, kayaking and golf. When shelter-in-place restrictions are lifted, I am sure we will revert back to enjoying outdoor activities but with a twist; we won't participate unless we can continue to apply social distancing. For example, before I play golf again, I will need to be assured that I can ride solo in the golf cart.

My wife and I are frequent flyers, visiting our children and grandchildren as much as possible. I am not sure when I will be willing to fly again, especially if there is no vaccine. In September we are scheduled to go on a river cruise in Europe. I can't imagine that happening. We eat out frequently but I don't know when I will feel comfortable eating in an indoor restaurant. In general,

I won't be comfortable in crowded situations where others in attendance will not be following social distancing practices. All of this may seem like paranoia, especially if you are not in our age category. But for me it is prudent reality.