

Tuesday, March 2nd, 2020

Dear Mustafa,

I had been feeling slightly 'chicken' for not going to Karachi last week due to coronavirus fears. However, as it turned out it was a good decision as, very sadly, a 'super-spreader' arrived at Jinnah International airport from Iran, and spent two days in the city criss-crossing my regular haunts. He only got picked up and quarantined when he checked in to the privately funded Aga Khan hospital with bad earache.

This illustrates the classic Emerging Market healthcare system. Its pay-to-play (or to be treated at least), and most of the population cannot afford this. So they will suffer from a non-diagnosed virus and will die from secondary ailments. Hence we can expect the numbers of corona cases to remain significantly under-reported in the Emerging Markets. For instance India, with a population of 1.2 billion, has not even reached 10 cases...what a 'false negative'.

If you arrive in Europe or the UK you have an underlying National Health system. This meant that in Lombardy, in Northern Italy, they were able to be zealous in their testing. The numbers of cases rose dramatically, even testing and diagnosing people pre-hospitalisation. The national Italian government and the EU have reprimanded Lombardy for impinging on people's rights. This is nuts...we are in a public health crisis and sadly people's individual rights, like in times of war, do take second place to the greater good of the

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community, until the crisis passes.

But Europe and the UK have the capacity to deal with this crisis as the population does not have to 'pay-to-play' - they are already paying for their healthcare through their taxes. This continent has a more robust foundation with which to weather this storm.

But if you cross the Atlantic to the USA we find ourselves a 'halfway house'. The bulk of the population will have to pay to be tested, on top of their normal insurance, as the test is not covered and its cost is unknown. So most people will not turn up to be tested.

This explains Trump's desire to underplay this situation as Bernie Sanders, his potential opponent, is offering 'M4 All' (medicare for all). This virus is a political grenade for Trump and, for now, he has thrown it into the hands of Mike Pence. Mike Pence, need we be reminded, wanted to use prayer to try to heal HIV.

With Super-Tuesday tomorrow, if Bernie wins a majority, it means that healthcare will be the prime issue of this campaign, and corona will be a key exhibit.

See you later in the week - Chris