

Letter from Dr. Yuqing Lin

Dear Konch,

I think it's better overacting than being indifferent. I don't know how wearing masks is explained but in China we have been advised to wear masks from the very beginning. In Wuhan the most devastated region, a lot of doctors are infected, some died, some on Ecom, because at first they were not reminded to wear protections. In the first two weeks, it is said the masks had to be replaced after four hours. Then medical experts said it was not necessary to change so frequently. It was no relief because we realized by instinct there must be a shortage of masks in supply. Today I went shopping in stores the first time in a month. Every shop has the words pasted on the door, "who doesn't wear masks cannot enter".

In China it has been proved that everyone can be vulnerable. It would be better to stay away from enclosed places and from people. The hibernation period is very long so there's no harm in being cautious. It was only after the whistleblower Dr. Li died that we realized everybody could die in this plague and it was not ordinary flu. He was under the best care at that moment and felt good, about to be released from the hospital, and then a sudden lung failure before the treatment could be applied in time.

In the beginning, Wuhan was a purgatory and sick people were confined in their house in desperation, with no place to turn for help. Other provinces not only sent medical workers but also undertakers to help cremate the dead bodies. China is doing good recently. Only because the whole country has been stopped to contain the spread. Wuhan collapsed in medical care and even basic livelihood and the provincial and municipal governments were quite visibly crushed at first. They could contain the disease only because more than 40000 medical workers from all over the country had been relocated there to provide medical support. The whole country has been mobilized to fight against the virus altogether.

The most strict measures of quarantine are being applied here in China. Some may not be necessary, but based on the drop of infected cases, they do work. I have to register every day to report my self-quarantine status to my school office and report my daughter's condition to her kindergarten. My husband goes to work, and his working place is strictly sterilized. In his company, people who have to use public transportation to work have been required to work at home to avoid possible transaction. Our neighborhood is still half-closed; to enter you have to be checked by a thermometer and present your residence card. Everybody who enters Beijing has to go through a compulsory 14 day self-quarantine at home under the supervision of the neighborhood committee. I have a friend who drove to pick up her family nanny from a nearby city when she was noticed to go back to work. When she arrived at home, she was further noticed that she couldn't go to work for another fortnight even if she was out of Beijing for less than one hour and never went out of her car. We live in a Kafka world now, with many more cases of people who cannot prove their validity of returning home or work.

I was noticed by the committee to apply for new residence cards immediately. The new cards would have our ID photos pasted so outsiders cannot sneak in by using other people's cards. I complained why such a fuss when the epidemic was almost over. The answer from the committee worker was that it's still far from over since many infected people come back from abroad and the epidemic is getting worse in other countries. The virus is not discriminatory and it's a proof of our living in a global community. All these regulations and supervisions are super annoying, but people are cooperative only for safety reasons. Different from where you live, Beijing is so densely populated that one infected person can cause a large number being quarantined.

We have taken all these extreme measures, especially sacrificing our freedom, helping local committees, because this virus is a threat most of us have never seen in a lifetime. Now the infection number drops quickly in China; on March 19, zero new cases in Wuhan and the 39 new cases in China are all internationally imported. It's the very proof that the virus can be contained. Only if people follow the scientific guidelines.

My in-laws live with us and take care of the children during the daytime. So our family of 6 people have been living in this 3-bedroom apartment for so long. During our almost two-month lockdown, I have had many moments of impatience and frustration. But I follow the instructions dutifully, not because of the government's requirement, but mostly because everybody know this is the best way to protect our family and society. I know San Francisco is in a semi lockdown too. That is a wise policy. I just hope more people's lives might be saved at the cost of a little inconvenience.

In China, all schools teach online with the help of all kinds of software similar to skype. Of course, the effect is not good but it's better to be safe. Schools are like prisons where the gathering of population may cause a huge outbreak.

We can move freely in the neighborhood, but we don't want to waste a mask and we don't trust elevators, doorknobs, and possible places of infection. Ok, it does sound we are overacting here. LOL. You can imagine how my jaws dropped upon hearing President Trump's speech about people can go to work and get better. Many people died in Wuhan because Coronavirus was not treated as it is. Please take good care of yourself.

Yuqing

