

NORTH AMERICA

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CORONAVIRUS RAMPAGE CONTINUES ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

Having already infected 1.68 million Americans and claiming close to 100,000 lives, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to devastate the United States. Coming off a high of 36,000 new daily cases (24 April) to the current 23,000, the US is facing the consequences of its slow and fragmented public health response. While the state of New York, once the epicentre of the virus in the US, has effectively controlled its outbreak through social distancing and increased health infrastructure, states like California, Illinois and Georgia continue to see cases increasing daily.

An undeniable contributor to the virus's proliferation has been the slow, confused and occasionally contradictory public health messaging Americans are receiving from their state and federal governments. President Trump, who in February stated, "within a couple of days is going to be down close to zero, that's a pretty good job we've done" has since delivered some unusual messages to the American people, including;

- Suggesting the 'injection' of disinfectant to 'clean' the lungs despite warnings that it would invariably lead to death;
- Not wearing a mask while visiting a Ford plant despite being asked to;
- That he is now personally taking the malaria hydroxychloroquine to prevent the virus despite warnings from the Food and Drug

Administration that the drug should not be used for that purpose;

- Telling reporters, "I [Trump] tested positively towards negative."

The messages from State Governors regarding the easing of restrictions and the resumption of business has been equally confused. Many states still experiencing upward case trends are planning to reopen towards the end of May. The New York Times is providing a continually updated article on States reopening [here](#).

The public health response of the United States has undoubtedly been poor, especially in comparison with arguably comparable nations such as Australia, New Zealand and even Canada.

However, the US does appear to be leading the way on a potential coronavirus vaccine, a crucial element in the global pandemic response. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), of the more than 100 vaccines in the pipelines only 10 have so far made it to human trials. Of those 10, the US is conducting 4 and China is conducting 3.

While the speed of clinical research is not an indicator of potential results, the US pharmaceutical industry is the largest in the world and with industry behemoths such as Pfizer, Inovio and Moderna throwing enormous amounts of resources into being the first to develop a vaccine in record time, it is very likely that the US will be integral to the medium-term solution to this crisis.