Jonathan Shi

April 4 ·

Italy quarantine log, day 45:

This entry is about adaptation and adjustment.

I worried and stressed a lot in the first few weeks of this. Examples include waking up in a panic thinking, "aghhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh a terrible pandemic is underway and people are dying and life is changing and everyone is scared", and then, after a few heavy breaths realizing, "oh... that wasn't a dream." Or just kind of stopping to scream internally for a while, at the terr ble events that were unfolding and yet to unfold, and with frustration at our collective failure to stop it.

I think that reaction is normal, healthy, and adaptive when faced with life-disrupting change. Preoccupied thinking and anticipation of poss ble scenarios, along with probable overreaction and vigilance, are just a part of how we survive new threats.

My pandemic-related worrying has faded for the most part, though. It's not that I've relaxed my precautions—if anything I've only ramped them up—just that I've gotten used to carrying on this way, and am better at it now.

At first I assumed that the social distancing would get harder as the weeks wore on: that was true for the first few weeks, but at least for me, it's gotten largely easier (thanks in part to a growth in my virtual life). I was afraid the stay-at-home rules would've started to be flouted by now, and that doesn't seem to have happened. It's an easy mistake, I guess, to underestimate how adaptable people can be, when faced with extreme circumstances.

The epidemic here has slowed, and I've been hearing noticeably fewer ambulance sirens these days: the nationwide stay-at-home effort has been working. The decree has been extended to April 13—though from what I see of the numbers, it will have to stay in place for a bit longer than that.

I estimate the epidemic might shrink to a manageable size by the end of April. At that point, I hope we'll be able to transition to intermediate measures, like no large gatherings, regulations to enforce 6-foot distancing, and mask-wearing to reduce the rate of contagion and minimize untraceable infections. Combined with rapid and large-scale testing (like, ideally of anyone with flu-l ke symptoms), contact-tracing, and isolation of infections, there's hope to keep small outbreaks under control indefinitely, as demonstrated by the examples of South Korea, Singapore, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the Veneto region of Italy.

Traceability of infections would be important for this strategy: as a (maybe extreme) example, China has been keeping track of everyone who shares the same subway car, everyone who is at a restaurant at the same time, etc, for the benefit of disease control workers. I know the U.S. has discussed the idea with tech companies, though I imagine it'd be more voluntary in the U.S.

To help support people and small businesses during this response, France (for example) suspended rent and mortgage payments, which is a really good idea imo! Land dividends are naturally low right now, so doing this is more like collective bargaining than l ke a price cap. And rent is like one of the biggest fixed costs for both people and businesses. If any landlords struggle to feed themselves as a result, well, they can apply for the same assistance programs available to everyone else.

This is how societies could adapt to the virus, and roll back a fast-spreading pandemic for the first time in history.

Stay well, everyone.

55   8 Comments 2 Shares

Share

Jonathan Shi, wonderful update, so glad you are still well! Would you mind if I shared your post?

9w

Jonathan Shi thanks; and no, i wouldn't mind, it is deliberately "public".

9w   2

█████████ Jonathan Shi I really have really loved reading your post and I think others would also. Thanks!

9w   2

Jonathan Shi I grabbed a set of surgical masks and some vitamins from a pharmacy on my birthday. I wasn't allowed into the store itself and had to ask the pharmacist for these items through a slot cut into a metal gate. I remembered seeing videos of Wuhan where this happened, and it felt kinda surreal to be in that scene myself.

9w   3

Jonathan Shi stores were closed by the time I thought about getting cake or something on that day, but I had some gelato in the freezer.

9w   7

█████████ Another shred of good news for ya in Italy

https://www.justgivemepositivenews.com/.../number-of...

JUSTGIVEMEPOSITIVENEWS.COM
Number of patients in intensive care in Italy drops for the first time

9w   1

█████████ Happy Birthday!

9w   1

█████████ Nice to hear that you are doing well and sounding so positive.

9w   1