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A Comprehensive Overview of Recent and Past Pandemics

A pandemic is defined by the outbreak of an infectious disease that rapidly spreads over multiple regions of the globe within a moment's notice. As each region of the globe is forced to face the widespread effects of a newly emerged disease, millions of people are thrown into utter chaos and unpredictability. This disarray causes the vast majority of our population to enter into a time where all knowledge seems to slip away leaving each and every individual in the darkness only to hope they live another day. This way of living impacts not only those directly affected by the infectious disease but also those who are living amongst the sick trying to fight for just one more day of health. It was not until recently, however, that the spread of an infectious disease, otherwise referred to as the "coronavirus", single handedly caused the largest reported pandemonium known to mankind and redefined what a pandemic truly meant.

The spread of a virus nearly halfway across the continent to the United States was a concept that seemed unfathomable to me and countless others as we all thought we were "safe" in our own humble towns. It was the only the beginning of a new year, 2020 to be exact, when I became fascinated by China's efforts to control and accommodate their people as what is now recognized as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold of their city, Wu Hang. I sat and watched countless broadcastings of those in Wu Huang as they built hospitals overnight, turned unmarked land into treatment facilities, and used all the supportive personnel they could to combat the virulent trail of the coronavirus. I believed in this moment that it was truly remarkable how China could take full control of an epidemic at the blink of an eye and solve

something so complex, but little did I know their efforts would soon seem only minuscule compared to what our nation and countless others were about to do as well.

As the week of March 1st rolled around the corner my once innocent fascination with China's outbreak became my newest source of nightmarish thoughts. I was soon to learn that the virus who took the lives of hundreds and sickened tens of thousands in China was now currently running ramped amongst the borders of the United States. It was only a matter of time until more people one after another were becoming infected with the coronavirus resulting in a widespread, precautionary "2-week lockdown". The 2-week lockdown was a prophylactic move that we all believed would stop the spread of the virus and ensure our safety as a whole, but we were all soon to be proved wrong as the number of active cases nearly tripled overnight continuously for the next several months despite our efforts to "stay safe" and quarantine. It was now evident that we knew virtually nothing about the characteristics of the virus nor its behavior patterns thus forcing our nation, amongst others, to enter into one of the most dark and terrifying times in history, striking the start of an official, fully functioning pandemic.

The pandemic has reached each and every person across the globe in some way, shape, or form for the better or the worse. In my personal experience I was able to encounter both extremes as a frontline health care worker. As a frontline health care worker, I felt it was my duty to continue volunteering my time and service as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) in transporting and treating COVID-19 victims in and out of health care facilities during the pandemic even with the virus spreading like wildfire. I made an oath as a first aid responder to help others whenever necessary and to do what was morally right and just no matter how

difficult or trying the situation may be. Therefore, as the pandemic swept across my town, I sat alongside other first aid responders at our local building anxiously awaiting our next tone out each and every day. I worked alongside countless paramedics, nurses, and doctors as we each showed up day in and day out to try and compensate for those who became acutely ill and needed our help. I listened to the tones going off every hour, one after another for patients with “respiratory distress”, “decreased saturated oxygen levels”, and “unresponsive” call titles. The calls seemingly faded together after a few days, which turned into weeks, and then months, and within time it became the new normal. The new normal was surrounded by hundreds of people falling ill, thousands dying, and millions left in panic.

I quickly fell into an unnerved state during the somber nights of the pandemic as I laid my head down and contemplated how strong I truly could be after seeing so many say goodbye to their loved ones for what they didn't know was the last time as they were only a moment's notice away from taking their last breath. These thoughts often circled around my mind and only briefly escaped when I would deviate from my empathetic train of thoughts and take a sharp turn into the “what-ifs” track. What if today was the one call that gave me the virus? What if today was the day I transmitted the virus unknowingly to another or my own family? What if today was my last guaranteed day of health? I worried all too much about these intrusive thoughts, but I knew in the grand scheme of things that I wasn't alone. There were so many other people worrying about the same things all while we tried to navigate through the darkness as one. No one truly knew what tomorrow was going to look like, what numbers were going to show, or how many people were going to die as it all was a guessing game at this point and the only thing we had was one another.

If there was one concept that future generations could comprehend about the COVID-19 pandemic I would want it to be the understanding that our greatest defense as human beings is the support of one another. The pandemic should be highlighted for showing us that the one opportunity we have as individual people, communities, and a complete population is to work together amongst one another in unison to bring about the greatest and most necessary areas of change. It has been evident through this difficult time in history that if we began working together sooner, more effectively and respectfully that we could have avoided the prolongation of this pandemic entirely. A pandemic quite literally means “all people” and therefore it can be interpreted that “all people” are included and the response of “all people” is necessary to combat the course of destruction that any pathogen takes. Future generations should take note of this pandemic not for the morbidity and mortality rates but for its significance of exploiting how when people choose to go against one another we not only fail as one or two, but as an entire population.