

# VIRAL PANDEMIC – REFLECTION

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Pediatric patients in a group Iron Lung ventilator – circa 1954. Can you imagine what they are thinking, let alone what they are going through; and the effect on the Nursing and Medical staffs? (Internet photo)

As we approach the one-year mark of living with, and hopefully surviving this COVID-19 pandemic, it might be worthwhile to reflect upon what has transpired, what we are continuing to do at present, and what the future holds for us. The CDC/National recommendations for the proper wearing of masks, social distancing, and hygiene by themselves do lower the risk of acquiring and spreading this virus.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, these guidelines are strenuously encouraged, and hence the last two ASAC Meetings were cancelled as per authoritative safety guidelines. We miss you all.

At present, very sadly, both the number of exposed, infected patients continues to rise, as have those who have succumbed to this viral disease. Our thoughts and prayers go out to these unfortunate people, and their families. There have been improving treatment regimens which are continually being developed in the clinical

front lines of patient care which appear to be positively influencing outcomes.

There is now more positive news regarding the development of various COVID-19 immunizing vaccines. Several were generated using weakened or inactive virus, whilst multiple other vaccines employ cutting edge molecular biology (mRNA, etc.) methods, which may be leading this science, and us, towards the future. Vaccines appear to be 95% effective in prevention, and we all hope, with proper implementation, to see infection rates lessen for the near future.

In comparison, nearly all of us experienced the polio viral scares of our youth. Many remember the March Of Dimes,<sup>2</sup> the fear of the uncertainty of just how polio was contracted,<sup>3</sup> and the public

health ordinances closing public pools, etc.. Then, do you remember waiting in line for the sugar cube doses of the much-awaited polio vaccine?<sup>4,5</sup>

The polio virus, and the disease it produces, has essentially been eradicated in the United States. Quite happily also, the greatly feared Iron Lung is gone – non-invasive respirators to alleviate the respiratory paralysis resulting from polio infection.<sup>5</sup> Please review the two remarkable images.



1955 newspaper headline – Polio vaccine – what fantastic news especially for this patient who is being supported by a smaller, more ‘advanced’ Iron Lung non-invasive ventilator. (Internet photo)

We certainly hope that all our Members and Families remain healthy and safe during these trying times. There *IS* some light at the end of the tunnel, just like in our past. We would encourage the Membership to continue safe and protective practices, receive their vaccinations, and please stay in touch with all of us by phone, email, and the ASAC Website Member’s Forum. We are also planning future Zoom ASAC smaller meetings on certain topics of interest for presentation and discussion. Please stay tuned and ‘keep calm and carry on’!

#### ENDNOTES:

1. CDC relates that these three methods can be as high as 95% effective.
2. Founded in 1938 by Franklin Roosevelt to combat infantile paralysis-polio. They funded the first-Salk polio vaccine in 1955.
3. In 1951, my father’s Medical School (California) class was warned, each of their four years, that several classmates were expected to contract polio from the patient wards. Some did, some remained with deficits. Sobering to consider this whilst attempting to study Medicine.
4. For me – Kindergarten in Newport, RI, 1962.
5. Salk’s vaccine in 1955 used live attenuated virus which required injection. Sabin’s vaccine in 1961 used weakened virus and could be taken orally. Combined, the risk of contracting vaccine-associated paralytic poliomyelitis was three cases per million doses given.
6. The risk of developing paralytic poliomyelitis was about 5,000 cases of paralysis per million patients who were infected with the polio virus. Not everyone who caught the virus suffered permanent and debilitating deficits. Those that did sustained paralysis, and/or shrunken limb deformities; many developed chronic Post-Polio Syndrome (sometimes years later- post-polio weakness, atrophy, pain, worsening deformities). Several of my childhood friends developed this.

