



June 11, 2020

To: Distribution

From: Pandemic Working Group

Re: **COVID-19: WHO Steps Back ~ Naval Study ~ Hydroxy Part III ~ Amazon/EBay**

WHO and Asymptomatic Transmission. In some respects, coronavirus is shrouded in mystery. Its mode of transmission, for example, is not fully understood. Consequently, we see a lot of back-and-forth on studies, reports, proclamations and comments. In that vein, as reported by the Wall Street Journal two days ago, the World Health Organization – specifically, Maria Van Kerkhove – walked back from her earlier assertion – that asymptomatic transmission of coronavirus “appears rare” – to a clarification that invisible transmission is “a big open question” and that “[i]t’s a new disease. We’re learning a lot about it.” In response to WHO’s flip-flop on the issue, Dr. Anthony Fauci, as reported by CNBC, stated that the WHO changed their earlier position “because there’s no evidence to indicate that that’s the case.” Dr. Fauci went on further to say, “In fact . . . 25% to 45% of the totality of the infected people are without symptoms. And we know from epidemiological studies that they can transmit to someone who is uninfected even when they are without symptoms.” In short, we have landed back where we started with infectious disease experts continuing to caution the populace about asymptomatic transmission. If and when further data is generated to improve our understanding, we will try to capture it for you.

Anchors Aweigh. On a related note – and isn’t it great how these things flow so smoothly – according to ABCNews, a new Navy study of hundreds of sailors who were aboard the carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt (as shown in this US Navy photo) reports that one in five who were tested for antibodies had been infected but were asymptomatic, while the majority of those infected had only mild symptoms. As you may recall, the ship’s mission to the western Pacific was interrupted for 10 weeks after 1,273 of its 4,865 sailors were found to be infected with the virus. This study focused on immunity testing and found that 60% of the 382 sailors who volunteered for the serology tests were positive for antibodies. Of the positives, 18.5% reported no prior symptoms. Also, eight sailors who tested positive 40 days after the onset of symptoms showed “robust antibodies” still present within their systems, which would tend to indicate a potentially higher level of immunity. Interestingly, one of the most surprising findings



was that loss of taste and smell were the symptoms most associated with infection – those who reported those symptoms were 10 times more likely to be infected than those who did not.

The Hydroxychloroquine Merry-Go-Round. As a test of your patience and of our credibility, we revisit the hydroxychloroquine saga. As you may recall from earlier advisories, this compound entered the public forum when, based upon early, limited studies (which showed a potential benefit as a therapeutic for infected persons), the White House expressed hope in the drug. Those studies were largely dismembered by experts on the ground that they lacked controls or were too small. Nevertheless, they gave rise to the commencement of many clinical studies, including by the WHO. Then, last month, President Trump (who has a full-time physician on staff) announced that he was taking the drug as a preventative. That was followed by the publication of an observational study involving 100,000 patients that appeared in *Lancet* (on which we also reported) allegedly finding that hydroxychloroquine did not have a beneficial effect on infected patients. Then, as reported in the *L.A. Times* yesterday, the *Lancet* study was debunked as having no raw data to support its findings, leaving some to suggest that the publication of the study could have been politically motivated. Consequently, WHO recommenced its trials. However, as reported in *USNews.com*, a recently-published, prospective, randomized clinical trial among 800 infected patients by the University of Minnesota found no discernable difference in development of symptoms between persons receiving the test drug and a placebo. To book-end this report and more apropos of what the President was doing, as reported in *NewsObserver.com* today, Duke University is hosting a study among 800 healthcare workers (volunteers) to determine whether the drug can ward off COVID-19. Between the Duke study (on using the drug as a preventative) and the many clinical trials (on whether the drug ameliorates symptoms in infected persons), we should have a clearer picture on this one day. One day soon. I promise.

Caveat Emptor. This just in from Anne Turnbough by way of Niamh McMahon, the USEPA announced today that it was ordering both Amazon and EBay to stop the sale of certain pesticides, including unregistered and misbranded compounds that are being marketed with false or misleading claims related to COVID prevention or control. Claims by vendors include “Complete sterilization including the current pandemic crisis,” “Kills COVID-19,” “Epidemic Prevention” and “Coronavirus disinfectant.” Among the products subject to the order was methylene chloride (allegedly as a coronavirus disinfectant and paint stripper) – not only is this compound not approved for any use with coronavirus, but it was also banned by USEPA for consumer use as a paint stripper due to acute fatalities of users from exposure to the product. USEPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler stated, “We remain vigilant against the claims of producers that falsely assert their efficacy and safety. Of particular concern are products that falsely claim to be effective against COVID-19.” Pictured here is one of the subject compounds known as “Virus Shutout,” which



was being marketed as a spatial disinfectant card alleged to provide protection to the wearer. Let the buyer beware and, in this case, let the seller beware as well.

If you have any questions or comments on this advisory, please contact either [kellyw@amvac.com](mailto:kellyw@amvac.com) or [timd@amvac.com](mailto:timd@amvac.com).

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