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### The Impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 has certainly thrown all of us for a loop. This includes students and teachers at UCLA, workers around the world, and everyone else. How fast everything progressed sent the world into a panic and put a lot of people in situations that they were not prepared for and did not expect. Schools around the world had to move to online, people temporarily lost their jobs, and whole countries shut down. This pandemic affected everyone in many different ways, and it did the same to my family and friends.

When I heard of the virus, I never thought it would come to the situation we are in now. I never even thought it would make it to America. I come from a very small town in rural Illinois, so my family and close friends were not near as worried as I was. They were more worried about me being in a very large city on a large campus with such a large amount of students. Along with going to class, I am also a part of a few activities. I work at a coffee shop on campus as a supervisor, I am on the board of Rotaract which is a community service club, and I am part of club gymnastics. With work, everything was staying pretty normal at the beginning. Our boss decided to reduce the hours we were open because less and less people were coming to campus. When we got the word that classes would be online, our boss told us that it was up to us what we decided to do. I talked to my parents and decided to finish out the week, then focus on finals.

I was extremely worried about work even before classes went online because I have a lowered immune system due to my medication. I tend to get sick very easily. This worried my mother and I because if someone came into the coffee shop with coronavirus or had been in contact with someone who had it, we had no idea what would happen. I decided that I was going to go home, to get to a place with fewer people and because I was planning on going home for Spring Break anyway. I had a flight booked for a Wednesday. My mom called me the Monday morning before panicking because she had heard they were cancelling flights. I was on a plane that night.

Because I had to do this, I missed a final and had to push back a few more. I spent the entirety of my break finishing up finals, so by the time I was done, I had to start school again. When I got home, my grandpa was still in the hospital and visitors were not allowed in the same capacity as before for protection for the patients and the staff. I got to go in to see him when I was not doing homework or in class, until he finally was released. He had a major stroke and heart attack the year before, so he already had trouble walking. After this major blood clot in his leg, it was even worse. So because of this, he had to move in with my parents and I.

My parents are both considered essential workers. My dad works at a prison forty-five minutes away and my mom works in the only open daycare in our county. Prison workers have to go into work because without them the prison cannot run, and a prison cannot just shut down even with this pandemic going on. The daycare my mom works at only has kids of essential workers that can only be there if the parents have a

note from their boss saying they are essential. Because of this, while my parents are at work, I am the only one home with my grandpa. I have to take care of him while also trying to simultaneously do my classwork. It has been extremely difficult, but I will do anything I can to help my family out.

My other grandparents have mostly been stuck inside their houses. My dad's parents have been self-quarantining by themselves since I came home in March. My dad goes out every once in a while and brings them what they need because they try to not go into town unless they really need something. This has been extremely hard on them as they spend most of their days with friends or going out. They have been extremely lonely, so I try and go out and sit outside and talk to them from a safe distance. My other grandma is in a retirement home that currently has no cases, but she is not having an easy time. She has stage 4 ovarian cancer that has spread to a few different places. She has had some doctor's appointments, while others have been cancelled by the doctors.

Every time she goes to the doctor, she has to self quarantine in her room alone for at least a week, sometimes longer. This has been very hard on her because the home is allowing no visitors and she cannot even go into the hallway. We just got news a few days ago that she has a mass, a pretty large one. Her prognosis without chemo is two months and with chemo, she has around a year, maybe less. Her past few appointments spanning over a couple of months had actually been cancelled by her doctor, who had been cancelling other patients' appointments as well. This news was extremely hard on my family and I, and also made me extremely angry. I understand

that doctors are under a tremendous amount of stress and that they face danger every time they go to work, but they are essential. All I keep thinking is if her doctor would have had the appointments, he may have caught it faster. She will be starting chemo in a few days, and what happens after that all depends on how her body reacts because last time, it almost killed her. She is a very social person, and she is probably going to not be able to leave her room now for a very long time. The one reoccurring thought I keep having is that my grandma is dying, and I cannot even go and give her a hug. Because of all of these problems my family is dealing with on top of COVID-19, my mental health has not been the best. I have been unmotivated for schoolwork as it is sometimes hard to focus on writing a paper when I am worried if one of my parents is going to bring home something that could lead to me or my grandpa getting sick.

Along with all of the problems my immediate family is having with health and coronavirus, my cousins and one of my aunts are nurses. One cousin in particular is working in the COVID-19 unit at her hospital, so therefore is having an extremely rough time. I think that this pandemic has shown that our healthcare system is not prepared for something of this caliber. There are nurses and doctors that are having to wear the same mask that is supposed to be one time use for days or even weeks at a time. This puts them at extreme risk along with the patients. In my opinion, healthcare workers signed up to save lives. However, they did not sign up to put their own lives at risk while trying to save others, and that is what is being asked of them right now. They are putting themselves at risk and our country is not even prepared to give them what they need to keep themselves or their patients safe.

I believe that the aftermath of this virus is going to change a lot about our everyday lives. There are certain things I do not believe will ever go back to normal. With what is happening right now, like with the state of our economy, with gas prices, etc. I am expecting that we will be in a financial crisis for a while after this. This does not even account for the fact that I have been hearing in the news that the virus is expected to come back in September or sometime in the fall, and may be even stronger than it is now. That is a terrifying thought, considering right now, this seems like the worst it could get. This to me shows that our country needs to make some changes in how we take care of people and how we take care of situations like these. Before all of this started, our pandemic team had been fired. That to me would have been helpful at a time like this. When our world and our country is so split over politics, religion, and so many other topics, it becomes very hard for us to come together. I think that this will hopefully teach the government but also just citizens in general that when a crisis like COVID-19 comes about, bringing everyone together goes a lot further than you would think. The amount of support people have been showing others during this time is insane. There are people in my hometown making masks for the older adults and nurses staying with patients, becoming their family when they can have no one with them. That to me shows tremendous strength and togetherness.

In a couple of my classes right now and in a class I had last quarter, I have learned about diseases and the impact that they have on certain populations. I have learned about smallpox and how it affected indigenous populations. When the settlers came over and brought with them innovation and many aspects of modern civilization,

they also brought over many diseases. The indigenous population was hit extremely hard by smallpox, and had not been exposed to anything of this severity before. It changed a lot in the way they had to live and forced them to adapt to something they could have never seen coming. This is what is currently happening to us. We have been exposed, the whole world, to something we could have never been prepared for. It is hitting everyone extremely hard, and we are all having to adapt and change to deal with the effects of COVID-19.

This virus has caused and is continuing to cause so many changes in the way we live. It has caused schools to shut down, workplaces to close, states and countries to go on lockdown, and so many more things. There are many things that this virus could teach us, meaning everyone from the government to citizens. It has taught us that our healthcare system needs a change to where our patients can be safe along with our doctors, because without safe doctors, there is no way we could ever get through this. It has taught us that we can evolve and adapt to challenging situations, like with how UCLA is learning how to do online schooling. These changes that we are making now will help us in the future in general, but will also help us be prepared if a crisis like this ever surfaces again. Coming together in a time like this is extremely important in helping people stay safe, but also in keeping peoples' hopes up. Hope that one day, we will be able to get back to normal.