

Stop the corona hysteria and throw away the masks

Now we can no longer survive without looking like bank robbers when it comes to shopping. In a few years, we have gone from mask ban to mask in order to reduce the risk of becoming infected with coronavirus, but it probably does not work.

A large Danish study, where half of 6000 people wore masks and the other half did not, has been rejected for publication by three top medical journals.¹ The researchers behind the study have described it as unique, and the results as controversial, and have said that it will be published when someone dares to do so. This hide-and-seek game suggests that the study shows that masks do not protect people from becoming infected.

The whole world needs and is entitled to be able to study this research closely. The researchers can just upload their manuscript to medRxiv so we can all read it, which does not detract from their chances of getting it published in a top journal. I would strongly encourage them to do so immediately, and I have therefore written to those who have made themselves known, Professors Henning Bundgaard, Thomas Lars Benfield and Christian Torp-Pedersen. I have also written to the Ministry of Health.

It is utterly unacceptable that scientists have not long ago shared their findings with others, all the while the whole world is being required to wear masks. Precisely on medRxiv, there is a review of studies of face masks posted on 7 April this year.² There was no significant effect of masks on infection with influenza-like illness (risk ratio 0.93, 95% confidence interval 0.83 to 1.05) or influenza (risk ratio 0.84, 95% CI 0.61 to 1.17).

The comments on these findings are also interesting. One commentator asked: "the authors reached the conclusion that masks do not have a significant difference in person-to-person transmission for influenza-like illnesses, yet they still recommend use of masks. What am I missing here?" The reply was: "That is not the recommendation, did you read the conclusion? 'we recommend the use of masks combined with other measures.'"

This led to another comment: "read between the lines, which appears to read, 'We are afraid to stand by what the facts really show about face masks, and so we are going to obscure this specific uncertainty by conflating it with another measure, to enable us to make a recommendation that doesn't upset too many people.'"

The Danish Social Democratic minority government is going it alone. Does not confer with other parties and does not present data so that one can see whether the drastic reductions in personal freedom make sense or are an expression of gut feelings.

Regarding the outbreak of Covid-19 on Danish mink farms, how was it found out that all mink within a radius of 7.8 km should be killed? Why not 5 or 10 km? And why is the infection so widespread on these farms? Is it because foreign guest workers, just like in the construction and slaughterhouse industries, live in overcrowded lodgings, saving most of their income to send back to their home country? If so, the focus should be on this problem, instead of ordering face masks for all Danes.

I would suggest something completely different. Instead of making us all sick, which is the feeling you get by wearing a mask, we could ask people with upper respiratory symptoms to wear a mask (to let the doubt about the effect of the masks benefit the healthy).

Drop the assembly ban that allows only 10 people to meet at a time. There are already far too many restaurants and other businesses that have gone bankrupt and community life is suffering. Protect those at the greatest risk, i.e. first and foremost the elderly, and allow our children and young people to attend classes.

Most of those who die of corona are over 80 years old, have competing diseases and a short life expectancy. Only 700 people have died with corona in Denmark. Smoking kills 14,000 a year, and smokers live on average 10 years less than others. We could save thousands of lives and tens of thousands of healthy life-years by raising the tax on tobacco significantly, but the Social Democrats have refused to do this, allegedly for concerns about increased cross-border trade (and probably also because of their smoking voters). This is disproportionate to the extreme.

Drop this mask order. There is more to life than fear of dying from corona, and the masks probably do not work.

1 Aagaard LH. Professor: Stort dansk maskestudie afvist af tre top-tidsskrifter. Berlingske 2020; Oct 27.

2 Jefferson T, Jones M, Ansari LAA, et al. Physical interventions to interrupt or reduce the spread of respiratory viruses. Part 1 - Face masks, eye protection and person distancing: systematic review and meta-analysis.

<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.03.30.20047217v2>.

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