



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Medical Science

THE QUARANTINE, THEN AND NOW: SAME IMPORTANCE

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ABSTRACT

This period we are going through is one of the most unhappy, darkest and painful in the human history. Therefore, in the present paper we intend to highlight the importance of Happiness in context of the new coronavirus spread out, taking into account that happiness means for the human being pleasure, satisfaction, contentment and a global assessment of life. We focused on the term quarantine and its larger meaning of lockdown and, by using analysis and synthesis of the elements from statistics, news and opinions around regarding this invisible enemy. It's a health and economic crisis on a scale not seen since the WWII, the economic support being essential for people. The conclusion is that the analyzed term is still valid and efficient and in order to pursue the Happiness there are necessary testing, proper treatments and economic measures to re-establish economies, to rediscover the pleasures of life.

1. TEMPORAL INCURSION INTO THE PROBLEM

The starting point in this scientific enterprise is represented by the one of the human unalienable right registered in the core of the United States Declaration of Independence is the *pursuit of Happiness*. In other words, people, no matter their culture and ethnicity, have the right to pursue their own self interest, firstly, but also of the community interest towards progress.

It's a simple question asked, but very actual: why this expression written by Thomas Jefferson adds the word *pursuit*? The *happiness* is effectively a goal we strive for, each in his own way?

The question is not absurd. Our conventional view of happiness is as an emotional state of mind and we can experience transient pleasure, moments of wonderment, enchantment, satisfaction. And all these, because we reach a point of fulfillment, a desired goal, no matter its nature and from this point we'll have another mood, another approach of life and work (Kokowski, 2012).

As Easterlin (2004) presents in his theory about *Happiness*, in the first rank of sources of happiness are the material (money especially) and living conditions. Of course, we can make a reference to the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, where the first level is represented by the basic physiological needs, such as food, water, cloths, shelters (McLeod, 2020).

But, on the other hand, authors as Drakopoulos (2008) sustain that money is important until a point of establishing a regular standard of living, i.e. of a functional and normal basic physiological background (level). Therefore, it appears more secondary/derivate aspects that must be satisfied and lead to reach the state of happiness.

In this paper we are interested in the existence and application of an ancient measure, which has proven effective, then and now, in prevention and mitigation of the disastrous effects of epidemics or pandemics: *the quarantine*.

For example, Merriam-Webster means by *quarantine* "a period of 40 days" relating to ships isolation, or "a state of enforced isolation", or even restrictions on the movement of people and goods.

We find a broader definition in the abstract of a paper written by J. W. Kerr in 1912, *the quarantine* being "the adoption of restrictive measures to prevent the introduction of disease from one country or locality to another" (Kerr, 1912). Thus, the term *quarantine* comes from the Italian word *quarantena*, meaning "forty days", used in the 14th-15th

centuries in the Republic of Venice, designating the mandatory period all ships had to be isolated before passengers and crew could go ashore during the *Black Death epidemic period*. More precisely, this dark period in the history of Europe and of the world of that time took place between 1348-1359 and led to the death of about 30% of Europe's population and a significant of Asia's. Therefore, immediate security measures had to be taken, such as containment to handle recurrent epidemics. The first action in this sense was taken by the city-state of Ragusa (the modern Dubrovnik city in Croatia), the newcomers had to spend 30 days-*trentine*- waiting to see whether the symptoms of *Black Death* would develop. Also, Venice took the initiative of the measures to check the spread of plague, having appointed three guardians of public health in the first years of the Black Death (1348).

For the present analysis, important is the year 1448, when the Venetian Senate prolonged that containment period to 40 days, thus appearing so well-known term of *quarantine*. This period of time was successfully used, proved being an effective formula for dealing with the plague and, as result, Ragusa became *the first city in Europe to set up quarantine* (Smilovic, 2020). That's why the action and the afferent term is common used in daily life until today.

We think that it is needed a delimitation between the term of *quarantine* and that one of *isolation*, even in many cases they are used interchangeably. *The quarantine* means a strict isolation imposed *to prevent* (our emphasis) the spread of a contagious disease. On the other hand, *the isolation* is to set apart or a complete separation from others of a *person suffering* (our emphasis) from contagious or infectious disease (Kelly, 2020).

And something more: we consider that the correct expression as an effective measure of prevention is *physical distancing*, not social distancing, because we are dealing with space separation in so-called sanitary zones for each person.

Throughout the history speaking, epidemics and pandemics occurred and acted in waves, the same as the business/life cycles. The mighty polis of Athens was hit by plague between 430 BC and 426 BC, these events being the first recorded of the action of plagues within communities.

Besides *the Black Death* from 14th century, already mentioned, in Romanian space we can mention *the bubonic plague from Caragea time* (1813-1814), with a death toll more than 70.000 persons (about 40.000 in Bucharest) and, notably the so-called *Spanish Flu* which hit Europe in the spring of 1918, coming

back later the same year and again in 1919, totally 36 months. It was a pandemic with 500 million people infected (1/3 of the world population at the time) and a death toll estimated between 15-50, even 100 million people, making it one of the most deadliest pandemics from the human history, especially in modern era.

In fact, this quarantine action means prevention to be infested by germs, viruses, contagious diseases, but also "prevention", figuratively speaking, of bad ideas, actions against law order.. For example, in this second approach can be inscribed those 19 years of "quarantine" spent by Edmond Dantès (the main character from the famous novel "The Count of Monte Cristo" by Alexandre Dumas (1844)) in Château d'If, considered a danger for the new French regime after the first Napoleon's escape. In our days, the quarantine represents only two weeks (fourteen days) of people separation, both for those exposed to a disease and for the people who enter in a city, region, or country coming from abroad, especially from zones contaminated.

But, the term the best describing the present situation in Europe and around the world is that one of lockdown. It includes more general aspects regarding restrictions on movement, work and travel on all people in a city, region, or country, that is economic and social measures.

2.METHODOLOGY

The analysis based on the survey of the literature in the field, data from the World Health Organization, from the national authorities, analyses of the specialists in healthcare and economics, reports of the people in difficult health and economic situations. From these sources, we are able to synthesize the situation at this point and highlighting what are the challenges of the COVID-19 and importance of quarantine/lockdown as an efficient external measure to control this pandemic.

3.Happiness in these dangerous economic times

We are facing now with empty cities, many businesses are closed, transportation is very limited, or absolutely absent, the majority of European countries being in the same state of lockdown. For this invisible and dangerous enemy, the prompt response to the early manifestations of COVID-19 actions had to be given, as in Greece case, which four days after the first death closed the non-essential shops and the next step was to shut schools and cancelled carnivals (McCaffrey, 2020).

Generally speaking, after about 40 days of quarantine/lockdown, the question is we are still happy, or have we enough internal resources to resist and to hope to recovery the specific personal, economic and social goals? It is very hard to say that, but we think there are important accumulations of positive thinking and trust, such that the normal life and work will be re-established. How long the restrictions will last, the more jobs will be lost and the safety of tomorrow will affect these psychological resources.

A good remedy, in this staying apart from others, it is represented by the family atmosphere, something like the Danish concept of Hygge (Wiking, 2017). The family is a unit who must be healthy, providing cosiness, understanding, ideas and experiences to do after the end of this pandemic period. The causal relationships highlighted by this mean and confirmed by the practice is as follows: happiness work/jobs efficiency the improvement of the quality of life.

As a result of this situation, the economy of the Eurozone registered in the first quarter of 2020 the fastest shrinkage rate that is a huge fell down in the GDP by 3.8 percent, considered bigger than at the height of the financial crisis. By comparison, China's economy, the second large economy of the world decreased by 6.8 % from last year, the contraction in at least half a century (McCaffrey, 2020).

The lack of seasonal workers for farms in Germany, France, Spain, Italy to pick-up asparagus, strawberry, grapes and the refuse of workers from Eastern countries, such as Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, has determined those farmers to charter planes and to pay for transportation for the laborers directly from their origin countries. Difficult mission, because, on terrestrial transportation, many countries, like Hungary, permanently closed their boundaries, somehow like the medieval castle-cities, where the economy was closed, being produced goods only for the home of the feudal and his subjects.

Amongst the solutions by the EU leaders is that one of a fund of 540 billion euro to help people in work and businesses afloat, towards a sound recovery plan. The amount will be shared between countries, or regions, which need more this financial support to survive.

CONCLUSIONS

The main idea resulting from this presentation is that the quarantine and its larger meaning, the lockdown, are still viable and operating successfully in our time, of course altogether with economic and social measures.

Many people are hoping that the authorities to easing of lockdowns, employees to return to their jobs and, even, some school to be re-opened. BUT, it seems to be a desired scope in the pursuit of Happiness.

A very recent British survey has demonstrated that about three quarters (3/4) from a sample replied that they agreed with the extension of the quarantine period, in order to prevent and preserve their lives. Of course, life is paramount in our existence, but in order to ensure material support (funds, allocations, goods etc) it is necessary that domains and entities function and people working to supply those budgets/funds.

Therefore, it is necessary the gradual exit from isolation, to strengthen the normal living standard and then, step by step, to regain the small accomplishments and to rediscover the pleasures of life. The cycle will be closed by the work and growth of productivity, due to the positive thinking and impact of Happiness Economics, and the process will go on.

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