

Final states reopen amid worries that protests will spark new COVID infections

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(HealthDay)—Michigan prepared to lift its stay-at-home order on

Tuesday—one of the last states to do so. But in New York, Gov. Andrew Cuomo warned that protests rampant in numerous American cities could trigger a second wave of COVID-19 infections.

"Protest, just be smart about it," Cuomo said. New York plans to reopen all of the state, including New York City, on June 8. State [public health officials](#) urged protesters to wear face coverings, use hand sanitizer, maintain social distancing and get tested for the [coronavirus](#), *The New York Times* reported.

At the same time, Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer lifted a stay-at-home order for the state's 10 million residents, saying that groups of 100 people or less would be allowed to gather outdoors, the *Times* reported. Restaurants are also allowed to reopen, though tables must be at least six feet apart.

And Louisiana's governor said the state would begin easing its social distancing restrictions on Friday, allowing venues including churches, malls, bars and theaters to increase capacity to 50 percent. But the mayor of New Orleans quickly tweeted that New Orleans would not be following the state's lead.

But as the number of U.S. coronavirus cases passed 1.8 million on Tuesday, a new poll shows that a majority of Americans still think it's more important to control the virus' spread than to restart the economy.

While nearly 6 in 10 Americans say the pandemic has taken a heavy economic toll on their communities, a majority of a divided country still believes that containing COVID-19 infections is paramount, a new *Washington Post-ABC News* poll shows.

Overall, 57 percent of all Americans and 81 percent of Democrats say trying to control the spread of the coronavirus is most important right

now. But only 27 percent of Republicans agree, while 66 percent of them say restarting the economy is more critical. Nearly 6 in 10 independents say their priority is trying to control the virus's spread, the survey found.

And nearly 7 in 10 Americans say they are worried about the possibility of a second wave of coronavirus infections in the fall, the poll showed.

As the U.S. coronavirus death toll passed 105,000 on Tuesday, jobless numbers released last week show the number of unemployed has now passed 40 million.

Concerns about hydroxychloroquine continue

Meanwhile, safety concerns over a malaria drug that President Donald Trump has touted as a coronavirus treatment prompted the World Health Organization to remove the medication from a global trial of potential COVID-19 therapies last week.

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the international health agency's director-general, said that the WHO decided to take a "pause" in testing hydroxychloroquine after a study published recently in *The Lancet* medical journal found people who took the drug were more likely to die, the *Times* reported. Several other studies have found the medication has no benefit and could possibly harm COVID-19 patients.

Regardless, Trump has finished taking a two-week course of the [malaria drug](#) to guard against COVID-19 infection after two White House staffers tested positive for the coronavirus.

And on Sunday, the White House announced it has sent 2 million doses of hydroxychloroquine to Brazil to battle the spread of coronavirus in that country. Not only that, the two countries are embarking on a joint

research effort to study whether the drug is safe and effective for the prevention and early treatment of COVID-19, the Trump administration said.

Disappointing drug trials

Hopes for another drug being tested against coronavirus infection have dimmed, after a major, new study found the drug on its own won't be enough to significantly curb cases and deaths.

The study, published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, found that, "given high mortality [of patients] despite the use of remdesivir, it is clear that treatment with an antiviral drug alone is not likely to be sufficient."

The study does suggest that remdesivir works better when given earlier rather than later in the disease course. "Our findings highlight the need to identify COVID-19 cases and start antiviral treatment before the pulmonary disease progresses to require mechanical ventilation," the researchers said.

Early evidence had suggested that remdesivir might help fight coronavirus illness, so the U.S. Food and Drug Administration gave it "emergency use authorization."

Already, combinations of remdesivir and other drugs are being tried, to see if dual-drug treatments might boost outcomes even more. For example, one federally funded clinical trial is combining remdesivir with a potent anti-inflammatory drug called baricitinib, while a trial from biotech firm CytoDyn is pairing it with an antiviral called leronlimab.

Vaccine efforts continue

Meanwhile, the search for an effective vaccine goes on. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) said in late May that it would provide up to \$1.2 billion to the drug company AstraZeneca to develop a potential coronavirus vaccine from Oxford University, in England.

The fourth, and largest, vaccine research agreement funds a clinical trial of the potential vaccine in the United States this summer with about 30,000 volunteers, the *Times* reported.

The goal? To make at least 300 million doses that could be available as early as October, the HHS said in a statement.

However, many experts have said that the earliest an effective, mass-produced vaccine would be available won't be until sometime next year, and billions of doses would be needed worldwide.

Pharmaceutical giant Merck has also jumped into the fight against the coronavirus, announcing two separate efforts to develop a vaccine and a partnership to develop a promising antiviral drug that can be taken as a pill, the *Times* reported.

The United States has already agreed to provide up to \$483 million to the biotech company Moderna and \$500 million to Johnson & Johnson for their vaccine efforts. It is also providing \$30 million to a virus vaccine effort led by the French company Sanofi, the *Times* reported.

According to a *Times* tally, the top five states in coronavirus cases as of Tuesday are: New York with more than 376,500; New Jersey with nearly 161,000; Illinois with over 121,000; California with more than 115,600, and Massachusetts with over 100,800.

Nations grapple with pandemic

In Asia, where the coronavirus first struck, several countries are finally returning to a new normal.

In the Chinese city of Wuhan, where the coronavirus first emerged, officials said Tuesday that they had finished a massive effort to test almost all of its 11 million residents, the *Times* reported.

Nearly 9.9 million people were tested during the drive, which began in mid-May and has not been matched in scale or speed elsewhere. (Children and those who had recently been tested were not tested in the drive.) The result? Roughly 300 asymptomatic infections were detected.

Meanwhile, South Korea has seen a spike in new cases, the *AP* reported.

The Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said 67 of the 79 new cases reported were from the Seoul metropolitan area, where about half of South Korea's 51 million people live. The government has shut public facilities such as parks, museums and state-run theaters in the metropolitan area for the next two weeks, to stem any further spread of the virus.

Elsewhere, the situation remains challenging. On Tuesday, the United Kingdom's coronavirus death count passed 39,000, the second highest in the world, according to a Johns Hopkins University tally. Britain has now surpassed Italy, Spain and France for COVID-19 deaths in Europe. With Prime Minister Boris Johnson easing lockdown measures, schools across England reopened Monday amid fierce debate over whether the move is premature, the *Post* reported.

Brazil is fast becoming the next hotspot in the coronavirus pandemic. By Tuesday, the South American country had reported nearly 30,000 deaths and over 526,000 confirmed infections, according to the Hopkins tally. Only the United States has more cases. Last week, Trump issued a ban

on all foreign travelers from Brazil because of the burgeoning number of COVID-19 cases in that country, *CNN* reported.

Cases are also spiking wildly in Russia: As of Tuesday, that country reported the world's third-highest number of COVID-19 cases, at over 423,000, the Hopkins tally showed.

Worldwide, the number of reported infections passed 6.1 million on Tuesday, with nearly 376,000 deaths, according to the Hopkins tally.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on the [new coronavirus](#).

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