



Fit, Fake, Faint in the Cloud of Fear for Fencing with COVID-19, What's the Optimized?



Suchet Takdhada

Editor of Royal Thai Navy Medical Journal

Academic Affairs Division, Academic Affairs Service Center, Naval Medical Department,
Royal Thai Navy, Bangkok

Corresponding Author: suchet.takdhada@gmail.com

Prevention of COVID-19 in the present is a hot issue in every group of discussion. Because of its effect in our daily lives, the concern of the contagion has impacted everyone around the world. The “No Frontier of Communication” made the whole world more closely, more rapidly and with more panic. The Tsunami of Data made us more confused and it's difficult to determine what's the real truth.

From the Smallest Organism to the Gigantic World Political Problem

Since December 2019, when the first case of COVID-19 was reported, the world politics focused on the two big superpowers of the world. The US claimed that it's the fault of PRC by letting the germ spread out without taking responsibility.¹ The conspiracy theory affirms that this was one of the biological warfare, leaked from the secret laboratory of China.² The PRC slammed back to the US that the American soldiers imported the disease from US to China³ and this was also a part of the US secret biological warfare series.⁴ Countless conspiracy theories started, leading to various “Fact and Myth” which attacked all of us.

Why did the conspiracy theory persuaded us to think that COVID-19 was used as a biological warfare weapon? According to the Australian Federal Police (AFP)⁵'s criteria, *the characteristics of biological agents include the following:*

- No immediate effect. The symptoms take time to appear, from hours/weeks.
- They must be inhaled or ingested. They do not penetrate unbroken skin.
- They are adversely affected by weather conditions such as sunlight. Therefore, they are more likely to be used at night or in enclosed areas.
- Likely to be spread through the use of aerosols.
- Symptoms include flu-like symptoms

These answers have led to the creation of the said theory. The polls in the USA from many influences of mass media showed that^{6,7}, the majority of Americans believed that COVID-19 was released from China's laboratory. Aside from that, the next theory was introduced - The Trade War in the COVID-19 Vaccine which made the world more horrible and more frightening.

Vaccine Trade War

Not only China and the US are involved in the mass media war. The quid-pro-quo in COVID-19 vaccine war⁸ was faced in every shot of media on earth. The nationalism was used as propaganda by superpower countries' pharmaceutical companies, whether intentionally or unintentionally. The free tariffs were set for COVID-19 vaccine.⁹ 'Vaccine nationalism' most commonly refers to the pursuit of vaccines in the national interest, for example, through supply agreements or export bans, including where this might be to the detriment of other countries.¹⁰ Unvaluable vaccine profit allured multinational pharmaceutical companies to compete in this war. As a result, all of this made us face data and media Tsunami.

Fake, Faint, Fear, what's next?

In many countries, the conflicts of interest are clouded covering the fear of people. Not only the harmful pandemic diseases affected the people but also the trade war over the vaccine fiercely stabbed their emotion especially when it comes to the efficiency and side effects of the vaccine. The god and devil vaccines were propagated in layman's term to instill fear to people. As a result of this, it led people to do something and believe things that are both humorous and nonsense.

The word "misinformation" about COVID-19 appeared in almost every piece of information and website. Because of the trade psychology, people generally went against the government's recommendation in numerous procedures. This made people all throughout the world to be persuaded to believe in a variety of ridiculous rumors. In addition, the superimposed "No frontier of Communication", the huge load of fake news or "misinformation" attacked people directly especially through numerous influences on social media which smartly reach your mobile phone.

These misinformation and fake news were as funny as the humor books.

For example:¹¹

- The 5G mobile networks can transmit the COVID-19.¹²
- The prolonged use of medical masks can cause CO₂ intoxication nor oxygen deficiency.

- Drinking alcohol can protect you against COVID-19.
- Thermal scanners can detect COVID-19.
- Adding pepper to your soup or other meals can prevent or cure COVID-19.
- Drinking methanol, ethanol or bleach can prevent or cure COVID-19.
- Being able to hold your breath for 10 seconds or more without coughing or feeling discomfort mean that you are free from COVID-19.
- The COVID-19 virus can be spread through mosquito bites.

All of these were fake and they were continuously re-posted again and again in a large number of social media platforms.

What's the Fit?

In my opinion and for those who were seeking for facts concerning the optimal and suitable method to prevent COVID-19, it was found out that there is no ideal procedure and method to use “One fits all”. We can break or disagree with many guidelines if we understand the reason and the situation that we all face. Everything has to be done according to a “tailor-made” procedure which will be different for each time, place and individual. Moreover, we must cite reliable sources of reference to get reputable information.

The most popular and dependable sources are the following:

- WHO (World Health Organization) website:
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- CDC (Center of Disease Control and Prevention) website:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- NHS (National Health Service) website:
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- National Health Commission of the PRC website:
<http://en.nhc.gov.cn/index.html>

In Thailand, we must cite the Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health of Thailand: <https://ddc.moph.go.th/viralpneumonia/index.php>. Every guideline that was applied to Thai citizens and foreigners was based on data extrapolated from international and local trials together with the consensus from Thai experts. The effect of fake and probable hidden political agenda impacted the COVID-19 prevention policy.¹³ Nevertheless, each section of the government and private sectors should consider if the Thai guidelines optimize their own situation or not. Especially in some special groups such as military students, medical students, prisoners, etc. and there should be their own optimal guidelines.



Due to the advancement of COVID-19, every recommendation and basic knowledge must be updated in light of the vast amount of new information that we discover every day. The fake tomorrow might be changed by the fact today.

The Universal Precaution or the standard procedure for prevention of infectious diseases should be kept in mind at all times.

The code D-M-H-T-T: D-Social distancing, M-Mask wearing, H-Hand washing, T-Testing, T-Thai Chana, should be done and should be stressed all the time.¹⁴

By Christmas 2021, the new Omicron Variant is suspected to spread throughout the world. The WHO has issued a warning to all countries to closely observe the variant's rapid spread.¹⁵ These must be another source of panic and new suffering which will stab us fiercely in the back again. We must once more think reasonably and analyze the information especially "What's the true truth?"

Final is not the Finale!

COVID-19 will be with us. Nobody knows when it will be over. This quotation is the truth. Everyone should learn how to stay with it. We should be aware and be cautious but not panic. In the past, we used to face and fence many contagious diseases, such as the Black Death (the Plague) in the Medieval era in Europe,¹⁶ the Spanish Flu in 1918,¹⁷ the 2009 Influenza H1N1.¹⁸ The policies and processes that were used to prevent the outbreak were different from era to era, situation to situation, and technology to technology. Although sometimes the contagion such as the plague had been used as bioweapon in the war,¹⁹ and nowadays COVID-19 was used as a political issue ranging from local politics up to world politics. We will be attacked by other infectious diseases more frequently in the future due to changes in the environment especially climate change or global warming.²⁰ In fact, we can face any contagious diseases with confidence if we have political support, government policies, or global strategies that is sincerely committed to helping all the people in the world.

The people in the politics must not use these contagious diseases as weapons!!! The mass media must have morality and journalistic ethics in order to avoid using the news for unethical purposes!!! The people should be able to make conscious judgement and decisions, and use scientific reasoning to choose which acquired information should be believed and weigh which fact is true and which one is fake!!! Finally, if we work hand and hand, we will attain victory in all situations.

References

1. Donald G, McNeil Jr, Jacobs A. Blaming China for pandemic, Trump says U.S. will leave the W.H.O. The New York Times [Internet]. 2020 May 29 [cited 2021 December 18]. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/29/health/virus-who.html>.
2. McDonald H. Sharri Markson's book on Covid's Wuhan lab leak theory raises more questions than it answers. The Guardian [Internet]. 2021 October 8 [cited 2021 December 18]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/09/sharri-marksons-book-on-covids-wuhan-lab-leak-theory-raises-more-questions-than-it-answers>.
3. Myers SL. China spins tale that the U.S. army started the Coronavirus epidemic. The New York Times [Internet]. 2020 March 13 [cited 2021 December 18]. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/13/world/asia/coronavirus-china-conspiracy-theory.html>.
4. BBC NEWS. Wuhan lab leak theory: how Fort Detrick became a centre for Chinese conspiracies. BBC NEWS [Internet]. 2021 August 23 [cited 2021 December 18]. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58273322>.
5. Australian Federal Police. Bomb, chemical and biological incidents. [Internet]. [cited 2021 December 18]. Available from: <https://www.police.act.gov.au/sites/default/files/PDF/bizsafe-bomb-factsheet.pdf>.
6. Brewster J. Nearly half of Americans believe Covid-19 leaked from Chinese lab, poll finds. Forbes [Internet]. 2021 June 9 [cited 2021 December 18]. Available from: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jackbrewster/2021/06/09/nearly-half-of-americans-believe-covid-19-leaked-from-chinese-lab-poll-finds/?sh=3dac84316431>.
7. Jackson J. Most Americans now think COVID came from Wuhan lab, new survey shows. Newsweek [Internet]. 2021 February 6 [cited 2021 December 18]. Available from: <https://www.newsweek.com/poll-american-covid-lab-1597027>.
8. Laurent L. Vaccine trade wars have just one winner: Covid-19. Bloomberg [Internet]. 2021 January 29 [cited 2021 December 18]. Available from: <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2021-01-29/coronavirus-will-win-european-union-s-vaccine-trade-war>.
9. APEC to debate proposal to remove tariffs for Covid vaccines, medical products. CNBC [Internet]. 2021 June 5 [cited 2021 December 18]. Available from: <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/06/05/apec-to-debate-removing-tariffs-for-covid-vaccines-medical-products.html>.
10. Vanderslott S, Emary K, Naude RW, English M, Thomas T, Patrick-Smith M, et al. Vaccine nationalism and internationalism: perspectives of COVID-19 vaccine trial participants in the United Kingdom. BMJ Glob Health 2021;6(10):6-11. doi:10.1136/bmjgh-2021-006305.



11. World Health Organization. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) advice for the public: Mythbusters. [Internet]. [cited 2021 December 18]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters#virus>.
12. World Health Organization. Fact: 5G mobile networks do not spread COVID-19. [Internet]. [cited 2021 December 18]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters#5g>.
13. United Nations Thailand. Social impact assessment of COVID-19 in Thailand. [Internet]. Oxford; 2020. [cited 2021 December 19]. Available from: <https://www.unicef.org/thailand/media/5071/file/SocialImpactAssessmentofCOVID-19inThailand.pdf>.
14. Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health. Coronavirus disease 2019. [Internet]. [cited 2021 December 17]. Available from: <https://ddc.moph.go.th/viralpneumonia/info.php>. (in Thai).
15. Nebehay S, Farge E. WHO sounds warning over fast-spreading Omicron. Reuters [Internet]. 2021 December 21 [cited 2021 December 25]. Available from: <https://www.reuters.com/world/omicron-spreading-infecting-vaccinated-who-2021-12-20/>.
16. Wade L. From Black Death to fatal flu, past pandemics show why people on the margins suffer most. Science [Internet]. 2020 May 14 [cited 2021 December 18]. Available from: <https://www.science.org/content/article/black-death-fatal-flu-past-pandemics-show-why-people-margins-suffer-most>.
17. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. History of 1918 flu pandemic. [Internet]. [cited 2021 December 18]. Available from: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/1918-commemoration/1918-pandemic-history.htm>.
18. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2009 H1N1 pandemic (H1N1pdm09 virus.) [Internet]. [cited 2021 December 18]. Available from: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/2009-h1n1-pandemic.html>.
19. Dennis DT. Plague as a biological weapon. Nature Public Health Emergency Collection 2009;37-70. doi:10.1007/978-1-4419-1266-4_2.
20. Kurane I. The effect of global warming on infectious diseases. Osong Public Health Res Perspect. 2010;1(1): 4-9. doi: 10.1016/j.phrp.2010.12.004.