

Our View

A look into the complexity of COVID-19

By THE ECHO EDITORIAL BOARD

We at the Echo strive to inform our readers with the most current news and stories. Additionally, the opinions editorial board is tasked with relaying the views and beliefs of the paper on many issues.

With the current worldwide pandemic at hand — leading to many social and economic changes — the views of education, society and everyday life have inevitably changed, whether temporarily or permanently.

We hope these views found below will bring forth facts and opinions that may be helpful in moving forward during this time of uncertainty.

The dangers of misinformation

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we've all seen just how powerful the media has become. From television news to social media, with such power comes the potential for the spread of misinformation.

One such case of misinformation was illustrated in a recent study by Leonardo Bursztyn and other associates from the Becker Friedman Institute of Economics.

The study examined the effect that the coverage of COVID-19 from the two most widely-viewed cable news programs in the U.S. — Fox News' "Hannity" and "Tucker Carlson Tonight" — has on viewers' behavior and health. Specifically, the study examined when the host of each program, American commentators Sean Hannity and Tucker Carlson, respectively, began warning their viewers about COVID-19.

Leonardo Bursztyn, with other associates from the Becker Friedman Institute of the University of Chicago, recently published a paper on this topic. The paper compared the actions of Hannity to those of Tucker Carlson, American commentator and host of the Tucker Carlson Tonight show.

"Carlson warned viewers about the threat posed by the coronavirus from early February, while Hannity originally dismissed the risks associated with the virus before gradually adjusting his position starting late February," Bursztyn wrote.

Bursztyn and company then compared the differences in exposure to COVID-19, using Hannity's followers and Carlson's followers as separate subject groups.

While the study is ongoing, initial findings show that the news media is a factor in how individuals choose to respond to COVID-19.

"These estimates also show that greater exposure to Hannity relative to Tucker Carlson Tonight is associated with a greater number of county-level cases and deaths," Bursztyn wrote. "Furthermore, the results suggest that in mid-March, after Hannity's shift in tone, the diverging trajectories on COVID-19 cases begin to revert."

In short, not only does the news affect their viewers beliefs, but these news sources also have a quantifiable effect on how the media's own beliefs and biases affect their viewers, even to the point of catching an infectious disease.

As one news source, we at the Echo encourage all of our readers to take in information with both wisdom and discretion. Cross-reference your sources; ensure that how you live and act is not entirely contingent upon one opinion, especially at times like these, when many people are at their most vulnerable.

Perspectives on lockdown

Looking back at the beginning stages of this pandemic, the actions taken by the U.S. government have been analyzed and criticized by many. However, Bob Aronson, professor of public health, thinks the so-called “lockdown” was key to keep this disease under control.

“Without (the lockdown) we would have been deciding who to save and who to let die because we did not have the capacity to treat everyone who would be sick at the same time,” Aronson wrote.

In addition, he said the lockdown could have happened earlier. He also said if China was more forthcoming with their information the U.S. could have prepared more, such as introducing social distancing earlier.

On the other hand, Jim Spiegel, professor of philosophy, is not so sure the lockdown is appropriate for this pandemic.

“I am a lockdown skeptic,” Spiegel wrote. “I do believe federal and state-level communications encouraging high-risk people to be careful are appropriate. But I think the shutdowns of businesses and, especially, churches across the country is an overreach and seriously damaging to the national and global economy (and therefore a risk to many more human lives).”

There’s no way to measure what the most effective way there is to approach this pandemic, but each person in the world can choose how they react to the situation.

Aronson wrote on this matter and how people can change as a result of this pandemic. We believe his insight is a great way for Taylor students and Christians alike to continue approaching COVID-19.

“If nothing else, this worldwide tragedy ought to make people think about who or what to put their trust in,” Aronson wrote. “Here in the US, we put trust in free market capitalism and militarism over trusting in the Kingdom of God. We should be caring more about how we can protect our neighbors instead of lamenting our loss of personal liberties.”

A glimmer of hope

Now that we are all allowed to head back to campus to gather our things and dead week is upon us, we feel a sense of ending. Can you count the number of times you said, “When this is all over...”?

We can’t either. And we know it will not be over for awhile, but how can we begin to process these last couple of months as part of our Taylor experience? Each student, faculty member and Upland local has seen this time in a different way. One thing students have in common is that we left with a glimmer of hope.

When we first received the email on March 12th and began to pack up our things and say our goodbyes, some held out hope for our return on April 14th. With sadness in our hearts, we said, "See you soon!" However, shortly after being at home, we all soon realized we wouldn't be seeing Taylor as it was for a long while.

The lack of closure is extremely difficult for many Taylor students. For some, it is easier to distance themselves and move forward. For others it is important to cling to the hope of coming back.

I encourage you to cling to that hope. This time feels discouraging from the memories lost to the internships cancelled, but there is still a promise of faithfulness we can count on. To the undergrads, we will all be together again soon. To the seniors, your time at Taylor was purposeful and pre-written.

Join us at the Echo as we cling to the hope of what is good and what the Lord promises to us!

Related Stories

The Echo

Still life
together just
online

By LEAH RYG



Taylor reaches
COVID-19
decision

By ANSLEY KARY



IWU pastor
faces grim
diagnosis

By MADI TURPIN
