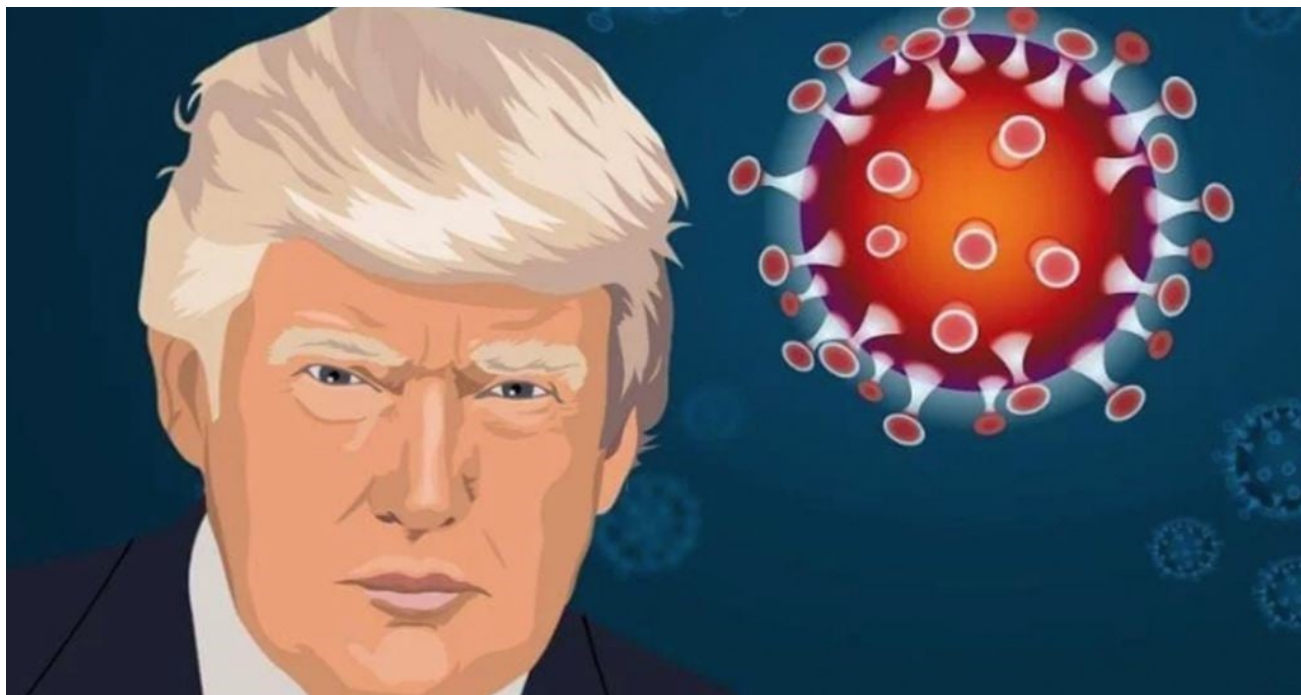


Hazards of Warehousing the Elderly

by G. Murphy Donovan



“There is no greater misfortune than dying alone.” – Marquez

The Corona pandemic has precipitated a behavioral sea change across the land.

We all now do things that might have seemed ludicrous just a few short months ago; no handshakes, no hugs, no kisses, and no large gatherings. Social intercourse, literally and figuratively, has become frozen in time. Indeed, for the moment: birth control, population control, and abortion debates may have been rendered moot by fiat.

Indeed, with the possible exception of Spring Break snowflakes, most of us are in some sort of social quarantine or “lockdown.” The intercourse of choice at the moment is “social distancing.”

If we are indeed at war with a virus, then the demographics

and outlook are grim for the most vulnerable among us. The target rich environment for the corona "war" is the senior citizen demographic.

Today, there are 703 million people (worldwide) aged 65 or older, a number that is projected to reach 1.5 billion by 2050. According to the [latest population estimates and projections](#) from UN DESA's Population Division, 1 in 6 people in the world will be over the age 65 by 2050, up from 1 in 11 in 2019. The latest projections also show that the number of people aged 80 or over will triple in the next 30 years. In many regions, the population aged 65 will double by 2050, while global life expectancy beyond 65 will increase by 19 years.

At the moment, approximately six million American older adults live in nursing homes or assisted living facilities to say nothing of all those "adults only" communities where the great divides are affluence and age.

The death rate (number of deaths/number of cases) according to *Worldometer* for the over 70 Covid-positive demographic is now 35 percent. The death rate for groupings below 70 years of age ranges from 3.6 percent to 0.2 percent.

Adding insult to senior injury, many countries and municipalities (England for example) do not report senior Corona deaths at elderly living facilities. Withal, segregation of communities by age doesn't seem to be a very progressive or practical idea, especially if you are over 70. Why would you concentrate the most vulnerable and then leave them in a facility where "social distancing" is difficult if not impossible?

The business model for elder care has always been transparent. Hire minimum wage, uncredentialed employees and charge as much as the traffic will bear for substandard and often hygiene-free care. Covid morbidity for seniors just validates another

selfish meme in the human genome.

Unfortunately, hindsight isn't insight

When the smog of "war" lifts, the Monday morning quarterbacks will come down from the hill, shoot the wounded and demand all manner of post-mortems and self-righteous investigations. When they do, we need to reflect on selfishness – and the "me too" ethos that has energized two generations of yuppies, millennials, and snowflakes – those who would party during thru the virus whilst isolating seniors to die alone in plague years.

Sadly, the Covid virus has put institutional euthanasia on autopilot and provided a tailwind for the Diane Rehms (PBS) "death with dignity" crowd on the American left. Dying alone in a nursing home, from a preventable ailment, has nothing to do with dignity of any sort.

It doesn't matter whether commitment to an "institution" is voluntary or mandated; confinement to a geriatric ghetto in a health crisis is now a premature death sentence.

We need to rethink the metrics of caring – and human dignity

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