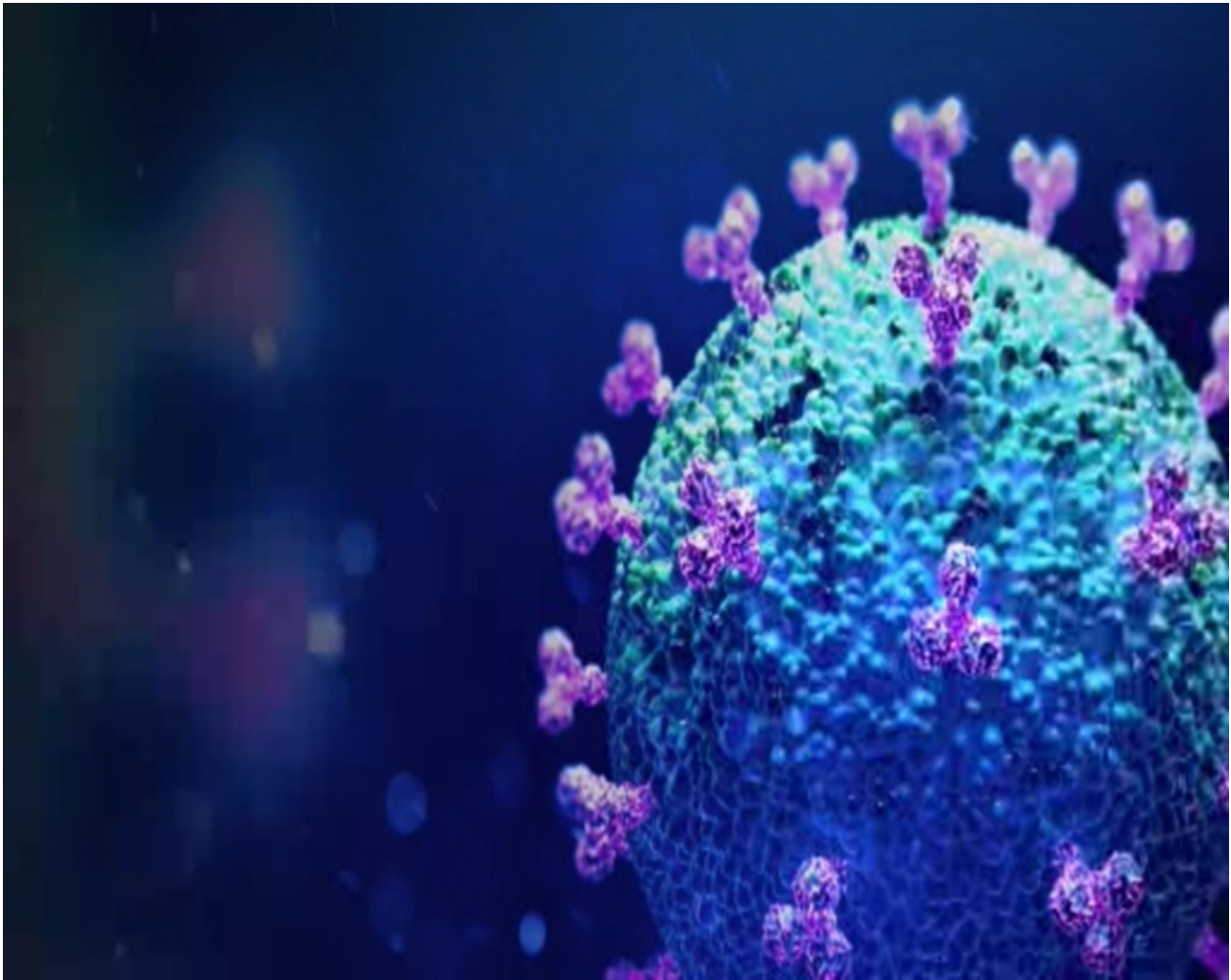


The Virgin Islands Consortium

No, Coronavirus is not Just a 'Very Bad Flu', It's Far Deadlier, Experts Say

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So, just how bad is the new coronavirus that causes the disease Covid-19? Some, including leaders, have attempted to downplay the virus as the seasonal flu on steroids, and have consistently pointed to the thousands of people that are killed by the flu annually to suggest that people should not be too worried about the coronavirus.

Not true.

According to the Wall Street Journal, citing experts, the new coronavirus and the seasonal flu are similar in many ways. Both are respiratory diseases that spread through droplets of fluid from the mouth and nose of someone who is infected. Both are

contagious, produce similar symptoms and can be deadly.

But there are some major differences. While both produce many of the same symptoms—fever, cough and muscle aches—and are particularly hard on the elderly, they come from two different families of viruses. People have more protection from the flu because there is a vaccine and they are exposed to flu viruses every year.

There is no vaccine yet to protect people against Covid-19, the disease caused by the new virus.

According to WSJ, scientists haven't yet established exactly how deadly or transmissible the new virus is. But so far the new coronavirus appears to be deadlier than the seasonal flu, which kills thousands of Americans every season.

Calculations of the mortality rate for Covid-19 have ranged between 2% and 3.4% since the virus was identified in China in January, according to World Health Organization data. Those percentages are derived by dividing the number of confirmed deaths globally into the number of confirmed cases.

By contrast, the seasonal flu has a death rate of approximately 0.1%.

WSJ said Covid-19's higher death rate is one reason that billionaire and global-health philanthropist Bill Gates recently warned in an article in the New England Journal of Medicine that "Covid-19 has started behaving a lot like the once-in-a-century pathogen we've been worried about."

In an article published on CNN, Dr. Tom Frieden, a former director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and former commissioner of the New York City Health Department, said Covid-19 is more likely to kill than flu. On average, about 1 in 1,000 people who get flu die from it -- mostly the elderly and people with underlying health conditions, but flu sometimes kills healthy young people and pregnant women.

"We don't know the precise case fatality ratio for Covid-19 because of incomplete testing of possible cases and insufficient information about outbreaks. But so far, Covid-19 appears much deadlier than seasonal flu, and quite possibly deadlier than the flu pandemics of 1957 and 1968, each of which killed more than 1 million people around the world," Dr. Frieden wrote. He said those pandemics had estimated case fatality ratios far below 1% -- and Covid-19 may kill more than 1 in 100 people who get sick with it. This is not as high as the 1918 flu pandemic, which has been estimated to have killed 2.5 of 100 who it made sick, killing an estimated 675,000 Americans at a time when our population was one-third what it is today. As with the flu, older people and those with serious health conditions such as heart or lung disease, cancer or diabetes are at much higher risk.

Additionally, Dr. Frieden said there is a fundamental difference in how flu and Covid-19 kill. Many deaths from flu are caused by secondary bacterial pneumonia and heart attacks that develop after the flu has weakened someone's resistance. With Covid-19, most deaths are caused by acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), which causes already-damaged lungs to fill with fluid, and makes breathing difficult. Unlike pneumonia, there is no pharmaceutical treatment for ARDS. That is why a potential shortage of ventilators is so dangerous: They are the last-ditch supportive treatment for Covid-19 while the body heals itself.

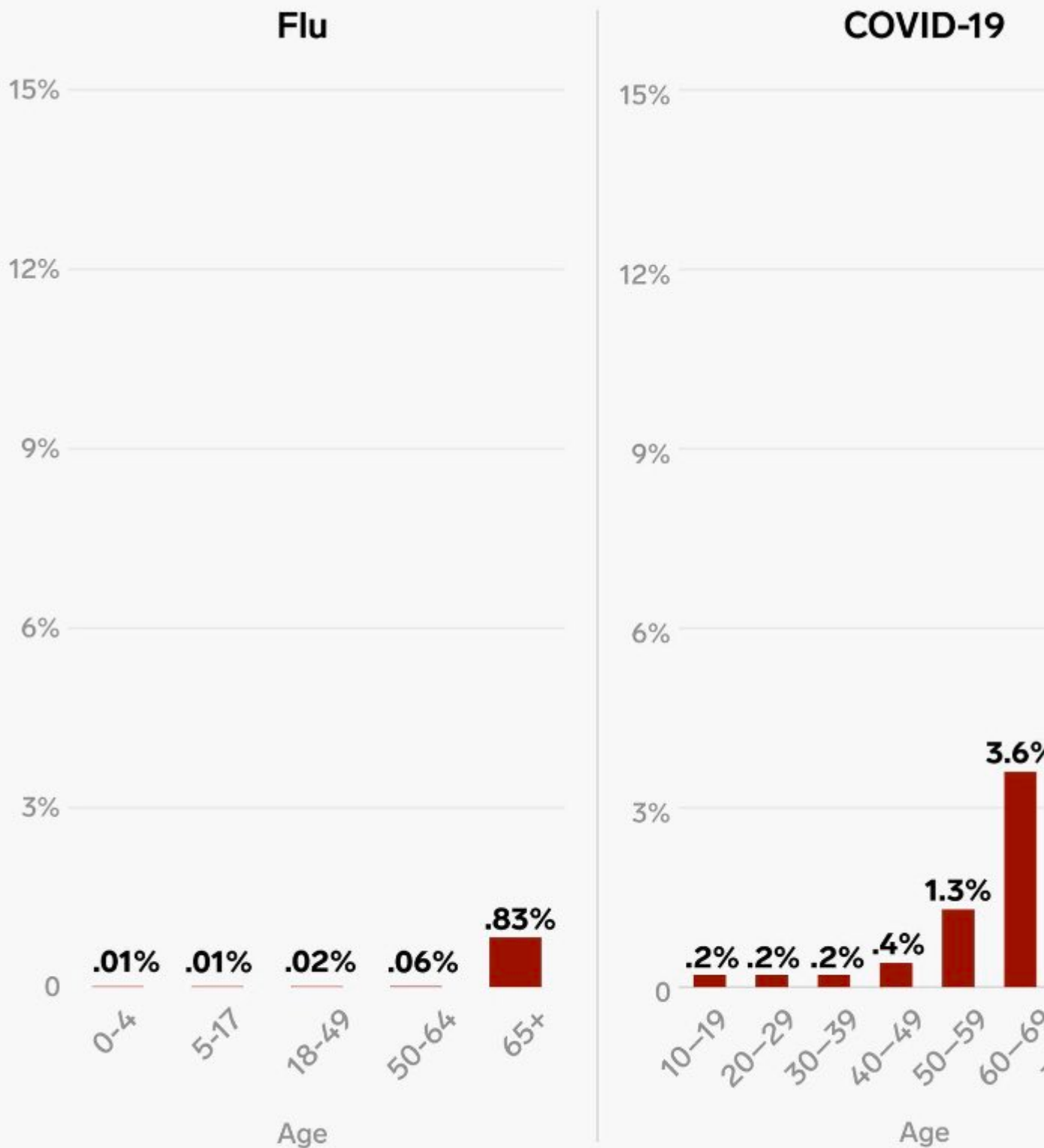
According to KevinMD.com, a leading medical platform for physicians, advanced practitioners, nurses, medical students, and patients, the fatality rate of Covid-19 approximately ten times worse than the flu.

According to the platform, the flu spreads from September through April in the U.S., and June through August in the Southern Hemisphere. And while the flu causes severe illness in many, it does so over a longer time course. Time is a variable that is working against us during this Covid-19 outbreak. Covid-19 victims will be presenting to a hospital in need of critical care at a rate that is far higher than occurs with the flu.

In addition, these patients will require hospital treatment over the course of a few weeks rather than the 3-4 months of a typical flu season. The health care system in the USA is not ready to handle tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of people over a short time frame, according to KevinMD. In Italy, the health care system buckled under the strain, and the health care teams are now [forced to make horrible life and death](#) decisions.

Below, a CDC chart that shows the new Coronavirus death rate by age compared to the season flu.

Flu vs COVID-19 death rate, by age



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC),
Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention

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