

Submitted by Patti Nagel, Leadville resident:

I am someone who has practiced much of the CDC guidelines that are being incessantly repeated by every doctor, every government official and countless company emails that have been flooding my inbox, years before the onset of coronavirus. I get it.

And as someone who has been following the development of this Wuhan virus daily since the beginning of January, I feel it is illogical and frankly an insult to our intelligence to expect people to believe that this is “no worse than the flu” when we are witnessing unprecedented quarantines of entire countries, shuttering of factories, cratering of economies and cancellations of anything scheduled on a calendar. None of us alive today have ever witnessed such events on a global scale.

I’m worried. We live in a resort region where people flock from all over the country and the world, especially now that it is spring break. I am also astonished at the amount of folks that I know who are moving forward with their overseas travel plans or cruises at such a time as this. For myself and my family, nothing is more important than keeping us healthy, so I am choosing to postpone travel until a more appropriate time. I cannot imagine being the person responsible for bringing a deadly virus back to my hometown of Leadville or to the place I’m visiting. I surely would not want to go down in the annals of Leadville history as patient zero – the one who brought it to Leadville. So then, it is obvious to me that Leadville may get hit hard because of many people’s refusal to cancel travel and take this pandemic seriously, but also because of so many unknowns such as how this virus could affect healthy people living at high altitude. Governor Polis has already advised at-risk people to stay away from the high country for this reason.

I was shocked to learn today that many symptomatic otherwise healthy individuals are not being tested. Rather, they are being told to go home and self-quarantine for two weeks. It is quite evident to me and should be to public health officials that we cannot rely upon most people to do the right thing. This cavalier attitude is putting the most vulnerable among us in incredible danger.

In America there are only 2.4 hospital beds per 1,000 patients. In 2017, there was a total of 931,000 hospital beds in the country. According to CDC data, the occupancy rate of these beds hovers around 65% on any given good day. A leaked document from the American Hospital Association from February states that US hospitals are preparing for 96 million **coronavirus** infections, 4.8 million hospitalizations and nearly half a million deaths. This puts the crisis on a level more than 10 times greater than that seen in a severe flu season, although the strain evolving from Italy seems to point to more like 60 times worse.

My questions to you are:

What concrete plans does Lake County have in place when the first positive case arises here? How aggressive and realistic are your plans for containment and the halting of the virus replication? Have you identified the number that is the breaking point for Leadville? What is it? Are you considering the fact that most individuals’ selfishness will override their desire to do the right thing? Are you aware of how the town of Gunnison was able to escape much of the effects of the Spanish Flu?