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Inside C2

Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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Anxious Americans to pay debt, taxes with COVID-19 stimulus checks

(Reuters) - Michael Johnson, a construction worker in Washington, D.C., is waiting for the \$1,400 check from the government promised after U.S. President Joe Biden signed the \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill last week.

FILE PHOTO: Aric Nowicki, who plans to use his stimulus check to pay overdue bills, is seen in a bar in Reedsburg, Wisconsin, U.S., February 23, 2019. REUTERS/Tim Reid/File Photo

He's not planning a spending spree. He's nervous. "I'll try and get ahead on my mortgage a little bit. You know, we are still in this pandemic," Johnson, 45, said.

Almost 900 miles away in Baraboo, Wisconsin, Aric Nowicki runs a heating and air conditioning business that takes in about \$150,000 annually but has expenses of about \$100,000. He has clients who are late on their bills, and he plans to use his money to pay his own overdue bills.

"I'm very apprehensive," Nowicki said. "I'm not sure the vaccines will bring us back to normality. Too many people say they don't want to take it, and there are these mutations."

In interviews with a dozen Americans, including a nurse, a man made homeless by the pandemic, a plumber, a teacher, and a bar owner, nearly all say they are so worried about the future that they will use their stimulus checks to pay debt and taxes accumulated in the past year.

Those spending priorities are not what massive stimulus bills are traditionally meant to achieve. They are designed to encourage people to buy goods and services, to help U.S. businesses and create jobs

Labor economist Diane Swonk sees a divide between those who can work from home and those who cannot - highlighted by the ways Americans have spent their stimulus checks from the government during the year-long coronavirus pandemic.

Consumer spending on goods was quite robust in January, Swonk said.



But that was mostly by people who did not necessarily need the three checks sent out by the U.S. Treasury in the past year. Most who desperately needed the money have used it for food, shelter, and to pay debt. "This gets to the



issue that a rising tide does not lift all boats," Swonk said.

White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki was asked on Monday how Biden here expected people to spend their stimulus checks.

"They will use it for different means," Psaki said. "Some Americans will use it to ensure they can put food on the table, that's a form of stimulus. Some will use

it to ensure that they can pay their rent. That's a form of stimulus. It's up to family to family."

Reverend Lee May, the pastor of Transforming Faith Church, an ecumenical Christian church in suburban Atlanta, said members

of his congregation "really need this boost." "This is intended to help and we feel blessed to have it sent our way, but it isn't enough to make us whole," May said. "We know there are prohibitions on evictions and shut offs of utilities for don't go away."

"More needs to be done," he said.

Reginald Smith, 36, a cook who was laid off in the crisis as many restaurants closed, was waiting in line at the food pantry outside the First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta on Monday.

He lost his place to stay and he has been "couch surfing" at the homes of friends.

"I need a job and hope to get one once this all opens back up," he said. "But first I need my own place to stay. I'm hoping that this (the stimulus check) will help me make a deposit, get a place and get back on my feet. I wish it was more though. I don't know if this is enough to dig me out."

Others are more optimistic. Steve Pitts, the general manager of Manuel's Tavern in Midtown Atlanta, hopes the stimulus checks will give people more cash to go out.

"We're hoping it loosens things up a bit," Pitts said. "To say it's been a tough year isn't the half of it. We all need a break. We've had to let people go and it hurt.

This, of course, isn't the cure. We're all waiting for this crisis to be over, but maybe this is a little light, a little bump."

Thadd Ernestmeyer, who runs a family plumbing business in Reedsburg, Wisconsin, grosses about \$150,000 a year, with overheads about one third of that, and is taxed roughly 25%. His stimulus check would go toward his tax bill, Ernestmeyer said.

"It's going straight back to the government."



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從台灣火到大陸的【不二茶舖】也進駐了休斯頓
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WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

CORONAVIRUS DIARY

03/16/2021



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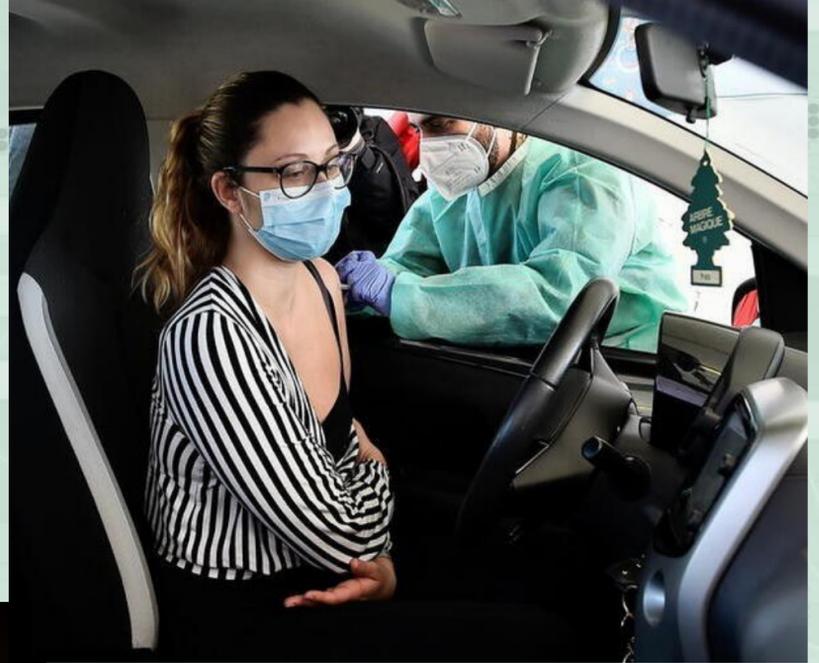
Let's Unite Again And Rebuild Our Community

Since Governor Abbott announced last week the reopening of all businesses in the State of Texas, we have already seen the cars filling up the streets in the International District and Chinatown. This is a joyful moment in our community.

Since last February when the coronavirus attacked us many people have lost their loved ones, lost their jobs and lost their businesses. Such a tragedy is really painful and so hopeless.

We are so glad that President Biden's administration has vaccinated millions with vaccine into our arms. Finally, we can control the virus from getting worse.

Today many of us can visit our loved ones and many grandparents can hug



their grand kids. The markets and restaurants have started back up with more customers. How wonderful it is.

Dear brothers and sisters, we all need to appreciate this vaccine that has given us hope again. We need

to be united and help each other to rebuild our community.

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Southern
DAILY Make Today Different

Editor's Choice



Jonathan Salas, 7, who bathes the pets for money to fund his plan for veterinary studies in the future, is pictured bathing a dog helped by his mother, at his home in Apodaca, on the outskirts of Monterrey, Mexico. REUTERS/Daniel Becerril



A man who was shot during the security force crackdown on anti-coup protesters shows a three-finger salute as he is helped in Thingangyun, Yangon, Myanmar. REUTERS/Stringer



A woman walks past Drum Tower during morning rush hour as Beijing, is hit by a sandstorm. REUTERS/Thomas Peter



Street animators wearing fancy costumes take a break on a bench in a park in Stavropol, Russia. REUTERS/Eduard Korniyenko



U.S. President Joe Biden replaces his face mask after delivering remarks on the implementation of the American Rescue Plan in the State Dining Room at the White House in Washington. REUTERS/Kevin Lamarque



Women hold signs during a protest at the Parliament Square, following the kidnap and murder of Sarah Everard, in London. REUTERS/Henry Nicholls

How COVID-19 Can Be Crippled By An Age-Old Blood Thinner



The blood thinner heparin could be used to trap SARS-CoV-2, effectively neutralizing the virus before it can infect healthy cells, a Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute team said. (Maksim Tkachenko/iStock/Getty Images Plus)

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Much of the effort to develop remedies and vaccines to fight COVID-19 has centered around the spike protein that the culprit virus, SARS-CoV-2, uses to invade healthy cells. Scientists at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute believe they've found a way to block the spike protein's ability to infect cells—and it involves a 78-year-old blood thinner.

The drug is heparin, which is widely used to treat and prevent blood clots. The RPI team discovered that SARS-CoV-2 binds tightly to heparin, making the drug a potential "decoy" that could serve as a way to neutralize the virus before it can infect healthy cells. They reported the finding (PDF) in the journal Antiviral Research. The RPI researchers made the discovery by studying gene sequencing data for SARS-CoV-2 and recognizing certain characteristics of the spike protein they believed would make it likely to bind to heparin. They tested three variants of the drug, including a non-anticoagulant formulation, against the virus, using computational modeling to define how they bound to the pathogen.



By binding to SARS-CoV-2, the blood thinner traps the virus, "which can't exist really sitting there, bound to the heparin. It'll just degrade," explained Jonathan Dordick, Ph.D., professor of chemical and biological engineering at RPI, in a video. Dordick's team was already working on methods for trapping viruses when the COVID-19 pandemic started spreading. The researchers developed a viral trap technology that uses pieces of DNA to mimic the latching sites on human cells, and they published research showing promising early data in dengue, influenza A and Zika.

While looking for ways to translate the viral trap technology to COVID-19, Dordick teamed up with Robert Linhardt, Ph.D., professor of chemistry and chemical biology at RPI, who is

well known for his creation of synthetic heparin. Some blood thinners are already being used by physicians treating COVID-19. Demand for Bristol Myers Squibb's Eliquis skyrocketed earlier this year following reports that the drug could prevent strokes in seriously ill patients. The RPI researchers are proposing that heparin be used as a stopgap measure against COVID-19 until a vaccine is found. The drug could be delivered in an inhaled form to people who have been exposed to COVID-19, they suggested.



"This approach could be used as an early intervention to reduce the infection among people who have tested positive, but aren't yet suffering symptoms," said lead author Linhardt in a statement. "Ultimately, we want a vaccine, but there are many ways to combat a virus, and as we've seen with HIV, with the right combination of therapies, we can control the disease until a vaccine is found." (Courtesy <https://www.fiercebiotech.com/>)

Related
COVID-19: Bio researchers race to repurpose everything from antiviral to anticancer discoveries

Jonathan Dordick, Ph.D., and his lab mates at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) weren't thinking about coronaviruses when they initially developed their "viral trap," a DNA-based nanotechnology designed to capture and kill viruses floating in the bloodstream. But as the COVID-19 pandemic started to unfold, they realized they may be able to transform their invention into a potential solution to the relentless virus—and they got to work on a plan to do so.



The rapidly growing understanding of COVID-19 has inspired several research groups to propose new methods for prevent-

ing and curing the disease. (ESB Professional/Shutterstock)

Jonathan Dordick, Ph.D., and his lab mates at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) weren't thinking about coronaviruses when they initially developed their "viral trap," a DNA-based nanotechnology designed to capture and kill viruses floating in the bloodstream. But as the COVID-19 pandemic started to unfold, they realized they may be able to transform their invention into a potential solution to the relentless virus—and they got to work on a plan to do so. "We have something that can be tailored specifically to the virus," said Dordick, professor of chemical and biological engineering at RPI, in an interview with FierceBiotechResearch. "There has been very rapid research that has come out in the last couple of months about the proteins on the surface of the coronavirus. Once we know their approximate location on the surface, and what the receptor is [on cells] that the virus targets, it allows us to very quickly tailor this DNA nanostructure" to COVID-19, he said. Dordick's team has developed a research proposal, which includes testing the viral trap technology in animal models of COVID-19, he added.

RPI is one of several institutions stepping up with ideas of how to take existing research and pivot it toward potential solutions to COVID-19. And these ideas are not just bubbling up in academia. Some biotech startups are taking existing antiviral discoveries—or even technologies they initially developed to address very different diseases, like cancer—and offering to deploy them toward defeating the coronavirus.



It may take several months or even years for these efforts to bear fruit, at which point this pandemic may have ended, but that's no deterrent, many scientists say. "We will see new viruses being passed from animals to humans again," predicted Christian Peters, M.D., Ph.D., CEO of Pinpoint Therapeutics, in an interview with FierceBiotechResearch. Pinpoint is one of the companies that's putting plans in place to target COVID-19. "We must have an armamentarium of different drugs with different mech-

anisms so we're ready for the future that's to come," Peters said. RPI's viral trap is adaptable to a range of viruses due to its design, Dordick explained.

The next step would be to use the same nanotechnology platform to kill the virus once it's snared in the trap. "In detecting the virus, we're also preventing it from binding to its receptor," he said. "We showed that the DNA binds to the proteins on the surface of the dengue virus, preventing them from infecting the target cell. In that way, we can inhibit the infection process." Dordick's team has shown that a similar approach is effective in preclinical models of influenza A and Zika virus, as well.



Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania discovered that inhibiting PPT1 slows tumor growth—a finding that led to the formation of Pinpoint, which is now optimizing PPT1 inhibitors to test in cancer. Pinpoint has received seed funding from Kairos Ventures, which in February kicked in \$1 million in debt funding to help accelerate the search for candidate drugs. Although it will take several months to complete the laboratory and animal studies needed to identify drug candidates against COVID-19, Peters believes the insights they gain will remain relevant, even if the pandemic has resolved by that time. "It's important to look not just at the anti-viral components, but also at the anti-inflammatory properties that these drugs might have.

The rapidly unfolding COVID-19 pandemic has inspired the scientific community to come up with solutions that will have the potential to save lives in the future, RPI's Dordick said. "The key question after we get through this tragedy is, 'how will we avoid it again?'" Dordick said. "Will we have to shut everything down again, or can we have directed therapeutic development? I think we're learning the lesson that we need rapid vaccine development and rapid therapeutic development. We're going to learn an awful lot about what we can do." (Courtesy <https://www.fiercebiotech.com/>)

Stay Home!

COMMUNITY

Wear Mask!

Pandemic Probably Will 'Get Worse Before It Gets Better'

Trump Holds First Coronavirus Briefing In Almost Three Months



President Trump led his first coronavirus press briefing in nearly three months on Tuesday -- without any experts from the pandemic's task force. Changing tone, he also advised Americans to "get a mask, wear a mask."

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

"Today, I want to provide an update on our response to the China virus, and what my administration is doing to get the outbreak in the Sunbelt under control. Seems largely in Sunbelt but could be spreading," Trump said to open the briefing amid polls showing Americans sharply disapproving of how he's handled the crisis. Comparing the U.S. to the rest of the world, he downplayed the impact of the pandemic on Americans by emphasizing it's a global problem, but he also made a rare acknowledgment of bad news ahead. "It will probably unfortunately get worse before it gets better. Something I don't like saying about things but that's the way it is. It's the way -- it's what we have. You look over the world. It's all over the world. And it tends to do that," he said.



President Donald Trump speaks during

a coronavirus disease (COVID-19) response news briefing at the White House, July 21, 2020. Leah Millis/Reuters

"If you watch American television, you'd think that the United States was the only country involved with and suffering from the China virus. Well, the world is suffering very badly. But the fact is that many countries are suffering very, very, very badly, and they've been suffering from this virus for a long time. We've done much better than most and with the fatality rate at a lower rate than most," Trump continued.

In fact, the U.S. is in the top ten of countries with the highest mortality rates. Though Trump took a less defensive and sometimes more realistic tone than he has in the past, he repeated that the virus will eventually "disappear" and continued to try to minimize any criticism of his response, touting his handling of the pandemic as a success story.

"My administration will stop at nothing to save lives and shield the vulnerable, which is so important. We have learned so much

about this disease, and we know who the vulnerable are, and we are going to indeed shield them," he continued.



President Donald Trump speaks to reporters during a news conference in the Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House, July 21, 2020. Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

In somewhat of a reversal, Trump also sent a clearer message on masks, one day after tweeting a photo of himself donning one for the first time, calling it "patriotic."

"We're asking everybody that when you are not able to socially distance, wear a mask. Get a mask. Whether you like the mask or not, they have an impact. They'll have an effect, and we need everything we can get," Trump said, following months of resistance. Asked why he doesn't wear a mask more frequently, Trump said he does when he needs it, despite only being photographed once wearing one at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. "I have the mask right here. I carry it, and I will use it gladly. No problem with it, and I've said that and I say: if you can, use the mask," Trump said, showing the mask in his hand but not putting it on. "I have no problem with the masks. I view it this way. Anything that potentially can help -- and that certainly can potentially help -- is a good thing."



President Donald Trump holds a face mask as he speaks during a news conference at the White House, July 21, 2020. Evan Vucci/AP

He went on to justify not wearing one in the briefing room, for instance, by saying he and

everyone in the room had been tested. "Oftentimes, I'll be with people that are fully tested. I've been tested. In theory, you don't need the mask. I'm getting used to the mask and the reason is, think about patriotism maybe it is, it helps. It helps," he added.

In another change in his messaging to "Open Up America Again," Trump said his administration is now "imploping young Americans to avoid packed bars and other crowded, indoor gatherings." "Be safe and be smart," he added.



President Donald Trump points to a reporter for a question during a coronavirus disease (COVID-19) response news briefing at the White House, July 21, 2020. Leah Millis/Reuters

Questioned by ABC News Chief White House Correspondent Jonathan Karl about whether the U.S. has a problem with testing, the president defended the state of testing, saying, "We've done more testing by far than anybody" but also conceded it would be a "good thing" to reduce wait times for results.

"We'll be able to get those numbers down. Those numbers are similar in other places. They're also doing massive numbers, numbers like nobody thought possible, but those numbers will be coming down. I agree, I think it's a good thing if we could do that," Trump said, seemingly referring to wait times as he referred to "numbers." Even as his administration has sought to zero out any additional funding for testing in the next round of relief funding, the president told Karl he'd be okay with more if the experts feel it's needed.

President Donald Trump listens to a question from ABC News reporter Jonathan Karl during a coronavirus disease (COVID-19) response news briefing at the White House, July 21, 2020.



President Donald Trump listens to a question from ABC News reporter Jonathan Karl during a coronavirus disease (COVID-19) response news briefing at the White House, July 21, 2020. Leah Millis/Reuters

"Well they're going to make a presentation to me tonight and tomorrow on that," Trump said, when asked if he supports more funding for testing. "I think that we are doing a tremendous amount of testing but if the doctors and the professional feel that even though we're at a level that nobody ever dreamt possible that they would like to more, I'm okay with it."

Karl also asked Trump about a claim White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany made earlier in the day, that sometimes the president gets tested "multiple times a day." Trump couldn't recall a time that has happened. "Well, I didn't know about more than one. I do take probably on average a test every two days, three days, and I don't know of any time I've taken two tests in one day. But I could see that happening," he said. (Courtesy <https://abcnews.go.com/>)



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