

Opinion of the Branch of Medical Sciences of the Assembly of Academicians and Corresponding Members of BAS on the Pandemic of COVID-19 in Bulgaria (October 28, 2020)

The members of the Branch of Medical Sciences at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, which includes some of the most prominent specialists in Bulgaria in the field of medicine and healthcare, are extremely concerned about the threatening development of the coronavirus pandemic in Bulgaria and around the world. Already over 43 million people are infected in the world and over 1.2 million have died, in our country - over 43 000 are infected, of which nearly 2,000 are health workers, over 2,200 are in hospital, nearly 1,150 are dead. These numbers are growing daily and the forecasts are really very alarming, especially considering the upcoming flu epidemic at the end of the year. The negative impact of the pandemic is huge not only on human health, but also on social and economic life in the country.

Particular attention should be paid to the early and late consequences of a coronavirus infection, which can affect all organs and systems of the human body. Unfortunately, there are still people who do not understand or deny the great seriousness of this pandemic and create many difficulties in the proper, scientifically and empirically justified fight against it. This requires a full unification of the efforts of the whole society, of all state, municipal and other public institutions, of every sober-minded citizen to fight coronavirus infection. It is our professional and moral duty to contribute with our extensive experience and expertise to the understanding and management of this pandemic of enormous health, economic and social consequence. There is a huge amount of information that appears and is updated every day in the public sphere about the mechanism of infection, its diagnosis and treatment, and especially prevention, which we closely monitor and analyze. The largest centers for infectious diseases in the world, such as the WHO, the US Centers for Disease Control, the European Center for Disease Control, Johns Hopkins University (USA), The Paul Ehrlich Institute (Germany) and many others, strongly propose the introduction of measures and policies to limit the pandemic via:

- introduction of quarantine measures of different nature and size, according to the local or national spread of the infection,
- high civic discipline and readiness for wearing masks in public places and glasses prescribed for vision correction, as it is an airborne infection,
- observance of social and physical distance, with restriction of mass public events,
- high personal hygiene, especially regular hand washing, as the virus can stay on various surfaces for a long time,
- taking medicine to support the immune system when the person is still clinically healthy, for prophylactic purposes, to stimulate the natural, innate immunity,
- limiting unnecessary social contacts,

- active outdoor sports,
- eating food with a predominance of fruits and vegetables.

Observance of all these measures, which are already actively implemented in our country, is the only way to limit the coronavirus infection. Medical science does not yet have its specific, causal treatment, a safe and effective vaccine is also an issue that remains to be solved. What we can all do as a society and as individuals is to show a high sense of awareness and discipline and to comply with these basic requirements in order to reduce the alarming spread of the infection and its consequences. In this respect, the role of the institutions responsible for monitoring the proper implementation of these measures is very important. We pay special attention to the media, because the behavior of the society depends on the objective information, which should not introduce unnecessary panic and anxiety. In this sense, we express our support for the policy pursued by the Ministry of Health and the National Operational Headquarters, which is scientifically sound and the only correct one at the moment. We highly appreciate the activity of our colleagues from other units of BAS who with their practical work and competent statements in the media contribute to the correct understanding of the coronavirus infection and to dealing with it.