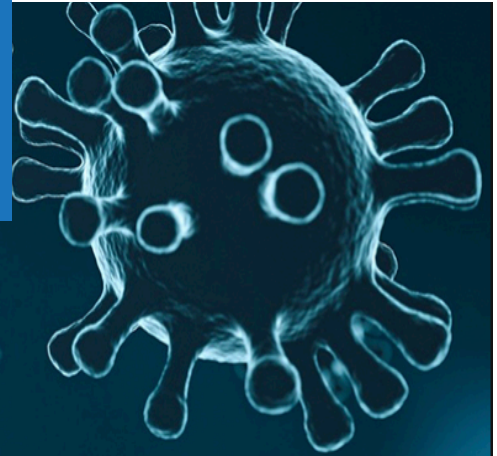


COVID-19 Testing and Contact Tracing



HOW SHOULD EQUITY, PRIVACY, AND UNCERTAINTY FACTOR INTO DECISIONS ABOUT COVID-19 TESTING AND CONTACT TRACING?

BACKGROUND

According to the CDC, contact tracing and expanded COVID-19 testing are key to controlling the spread of COVID-19. Countries such as South Korea and Singapore that have controlled the virus without long-term lockdowns list widespread contact tracing, testing, and citizen buy-in as crucial components of their strategies. In the United States, many states have put Contact Tracing in place to curb the spread of COVID-19. Contact Tracers depend on people sharing their contacts and whereabouts to understand how and where the virus is spreading. In order for contact tracing to work effectively, health officials insist that infected citizens should be tested and identified as quickly as possible.

THE ISSUES

In the United States, where citizens speak many different languages and come from diverse backgrounds, there is a significant gap in access to contact tracing and COVID-19 testing. Minority communities who are most affected by COVID-19 have the least access to testing and face unique challenges during contact tracing. Citizens are also worried about their privacy during contact tracing and are made anxious by propagation of conflicting information regarding both testing and tracing. According to PEW Research, 41% of people said they would be unlikely to speak with a state health official if they were contact traced, highlighting the lack of trust between science experts and communities.

MOVING FORWARD: ADDRESSING THE ISSUES

Option 1: Prioritize equitable resource distribution

Option 2: Respect privacy and let people decide what information they want to share

Option 3: Address Public Concerns About Testing and Tracing

OPTION 1: PRIORITIZE EQUITABLE RESOURCE DISTRIBUTION

Everyone should have sufficient access to COVID-19 testing and contact tracing.

This option insists that marginalized groups should be prioritized in the distribution of testing resources. Special considerations should be made to protect the safety and comfort of minority communities during contact tracing.

BUT developing, distributing, and building trust in equitable resources takes time and is costly.

Therefore, a focused development of new resources may slow response to the current COVID-19 surge.

What can be done	Trade-offs to consider
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Federal government funds and operates free COVID-19 test centers in low-income communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Community members often don't trust emerging health centers run by a government they don't trust
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Hospitals provide doctors, nurses, and other front line healthcare workers with biweekly COVID-19 testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">COVID-19 testing is a highly limited resource and routine testing for healthcare workers would take testing resources from hospital patients.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Local governments implement minimum quotas for the hiring of racially and ethnically diverse Contact Tracers as well as multilingual Contact Tracers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">It takes time to recruit and hire new contact tracers. This would slow response to the current COVID-19 surge
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Contact tracing groups organize socially distanced, in person contact tracing for those who do not have access to technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">It is dangerous for contact tracers to come into physical contact with COVID-19 positive and COVID-19 exposed people, even with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Insurance companies should fund at-home rapid antigen testing for any member who qualifies under a high-risk category	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Rapid tests are less accurate than diagnostic RT-PCR tests and can therefore give people a false sense of security from a negative result

OPTION 2: LET INDIVIDUALS DECIDE WHAT INFORMATION TO SHARE

People with COVID-19 might hesitate to provide information because they are uncomfortable sharing sensitive information. They could also be fearing retaliation from employers and peers if they give out their contacts and whereabouts. As a result, to respect the privacy and concerns of people, they should be allowed to decide how much information they share.

BUT, allowing people to decide the extent of information they share, might jeopardize contact tracing and testing efforts as they depend on identifying information to do their job.

What can be done

- Let people decide how much information they share with Contact Tracers
- Contact Tracers stop asking for sensitive personal information like home address and Date of birth over the phone during contact tracing
- Contact Tracers inform contacts why they are asking for certain information and who it will be shared with, and limit the accessibility of private information to only employee that need to access it
- Contact tracing organizations upgrade technology to ensure that information is securely stored
- State governments conduct contact tracing through automated Bluetooth apps that do not require person-to-person information disclosure

Trade-offs to consider

- Contact Tracing efforts depend on cases sharing who they have been in contact with and withholding information will make matters worse
- Government and health officials will not be able to provide equitable support needed without having access to personal information that helps identify gaps
- Limiting accessibility to few personals leads to delay in providing support since employees have to go through multiple people before they are able to access the information needed to support community members
- Technology is always susceptible to cyber-attacks and people might not feel comfortable with their information being stored online no matter how secure it is perceived to be
- Vulnerable populations who have less access to technology will be difficult to reach through contact tracing

OPTION 3: ADDRESS PUBLIC CONCERNS ABOUT TESTING AND TRACING

The COVID-19 pandemic, and specifically information regarding contact tracing and testing has taken a mental/emotional toll on everyone, largely due to the lack of information and general uncertainty. The powerful stakeholders need to address public concerns regarding contact tracing and testing to alleviate the stress of all community members.

BUT, allowing governments and powerful stakeholders to control the “narrative” may prove detrimental in a national environment of divide and unrest.

What can be done

- Local governments post information guides online with the ability to access a call center in order to one-on-one chat with local leaders and hired trainers that have knowledge on COVID-19 testing
- Media stations host forums where they present information on testing, including locations, prices, insurance coverage, and more
- Let individuals figure out their concerns on all testing and contact tracing through internet research, talking with folks, and listening to media sources
- Government leaders respond to concerns on testing and the privacy of contact tracing through individual state briefings

Trade-offs to consider

- Folks with inadequate technology cannot access the chat and will not receive proper information and their concerns will not be accounted for
- Misinformation and bias from media outlets will relay opposing messages, confusing the public and having a negative effect on the original concern brought forward by the community member
- Individuals will be steered in the wrong direction and their concerns will be guided by their environment, causing inaccurate and bias conclusions to their concerns
- Political differences between states will alter the answers to concerns and individuals from different states will be given information from opposite