

From: Fauci, Anthony (NIH/NIAID) [E]
Sent: Tue, 4 Feb 2020 00:29:06 +0000
To: Kai Kupferschmidt
Cc: Greg Folkers (b) (6); Billet, Courtney (NIH/NIAID) [E]
Subject: RE: coronavirus quick question

Kai:

Sorry that I got to this so late. I have been swamped. I just read your story in Science. It is unfortunate that they did not interview the patient. Obviously, this changes the conclusion of the paper. My comment: "There's no doubt after reading [the *NEJM*] paper that asymptomatic transmission is occurring" was made because there has been a lot of discussion among Chinese investigators that asymptomatic infection is occurring in Wuhan City and Hubei Province, yet no publication came out and said this. Since this was the first publication supposedly documenting this phenomenon, that is why I referred to the paper and made my comment. It is unfortunate that this error was published, but it still does not really change anything. Rather than rely on rumors, this evening I telephoned one of my colleagues in China who is a highly respected infectious diseases scientist and health official. He said that he is convinced that there is asymptomatic infection and that some asymptomatic people are transmitting infection. The *NEJM* paper may be incorrect, but according to reputable Chinese scientists, my statement is correct. Having said that, I have been saying for some time that even if asymptomatic infection occurs, it is very unlikely to be a major driver of the outbreak since most transmissions occur from someone who is asymptomatic.

Best regards,

Tony

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