

A Swiss Doctor on Covid-19 (14 March 2020)

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A Swiss medical doctor provided the following information on the current situation in order to enable our readers to make a realistic risk assessment.

According to the latest data of the Italian National Health Institute ISS, the average age of the positively-tested deceased in Italy currently is about 81 years. 90% of the deceased are over 70 years old. 10% of the deceased are over 90 years old.

80% of the deceased had suffered from two or more chronic diseases. 50% of the deceased had suffered from three or more chronic diseases. The chronic diseases include in particular cardiovascular problems, diabetes, respiratory problems and cancer.

Less than 1% of the deceased were healthy persons, i.e. persons without pre-existing chronic diseases. Only about 30% of the deceased are women.

The Italian Institute of Health moreover distinguishes between those who died *from* the coronavirus and those who died *with* the coronavirus. In many cases it

is not yet clear whether the persons died from the virus or from their pre-existing chronic diseases or from a combination of both.

The two Italians deceased under 40 years of age (both 39 years old) were a cancer patient and a diabetes patient with additional complications. In these cases, too, the exact cause of death was not yet clear (i.e. if from the virus or from their pre-existing diseases).

The partial overloading of the hospitals is due to the general rush of patients and the increased number of patients requiring special or intensive care. In particular, the aim is to stabilize respiratory function and, in severe cases, to provide anti-viral therapies.

(Update: The Italian National Institute of Health published a statistical report on test-positive patients and deceased, confirming the above data.)

The following aspects should also be taken into account:

Northern Italy has one of the oldest populations and the worst air quality in Europe, which had already led to an increased number of respiratory diseases and deaths in the past and is likely an additional risk factor in the current epidemic.

South Korea, for instance, has experienced a much milder course than Italy and has already passed the peak of the epidemic. In South Korea, only about 70

deaths with a positive test result have been reported so far. As in Italy, those affected were mostly high-risk patients.

The few dozen test-positive Swiss deaths so far were also high-risk patients with chronic diseases, an average age of more than 80 years and a maximum age of 97 years, whose exact cause of death, i.e. from the virus or from their pre-existing diseases, is not yet known.

Furthermore, studies have shown that the internationally used virus test kits may give a false positive result in some cases. In these cases, the persons may *not* have contracted the new coronavirus, but presumably one of the many existing human coronaviruses that are part of the annual (and currently ongoing) common cold and flu epidemics.

Thus the most important indicator for judging the danger of the disease is *not* the frequently reported number of positively-tested persons and deaths, but the number of persons actually and unexpectedly developing or dying *from pneumonia* (so-called excess mortality).

According to all current data, for the healthy general population of school and working age, a mild to moderate course of the Covid-19 disease can be expected. Senior citizens and persons with existing chronic diseases should be protected. The medical capacities should be optimally prepared.