

**Comparison of Black Death and Covid Pandemic**

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This paper presents comparative analysis of two significant pandemics: the Black Death and COVID-19. The Black Death was a devastating plague that ravaged Europe, Asia, and Africa during the 14th century. COVID-19, humanities most recent pandemic, emerged in late 2019 and continues to impact the world today. These pandemics, while similar in some respects, are very different in others. They are separated by several centuries and exhibit notable distinctions in terms of global ramifications, medical knowledge, and societal responses. These differences are rooted in unique historical contexts, disparities in scientific understanding, and advancements in technology and healthcare infrastructure.

The Black Death gets its name from the fact that it was a dark and horrific time, not from the effects of the plague itself. In the Middle Ages, it was known as the Great Mortality or the Great Pestilence. While the exact location of its origin is unknown, it is widely believed to have come from Central Asia, specifically around regions in modern day China and Mongolia. It is thought that fleas carried by rodents, particularly black rats, played a crucial role in the transmission of the disease. The bacteria *Yersinia pestis*, responsible for the Black Death, could be carried by fleas and transmitted to humans through flea bites. The disease could also be contracted through direct contact with infected tissue and through airborne transmission from an infected person. Trade routes and armies were also responsible for the rapid spread of the disease, as merchant ships and caravans brought with them rodents and people infected with the disease. (Slavicek, 2008, 37).

People in Asia, Africa, and Europe were all affected. Antibiotics would not be invented for another several hundred years, and medical knowledge was practically non-existent at the time. This left people helpless as the plague ravaged through the world's population, and this

inability to combat the disease is reflected by the vast number of dead. Nearly half of Europe's population was killed by the disease and two hundred million people worldwide. As the population of the world at the time was around five hundred million people, that means around two fifths of the world population died because of the Black Death. So many people died that there were bodies littering the streets and public spaces of cities and towns affected by the disease. Mass graves were used to bury the dead, even layering the bodies inside of them. (Armstrong, 2022).

Such was the multitude of corpses that there was not sufficient consecrated ground for them to be buried in, so when all the graves were full, huge trenches were excavated in the churchyards, into which new arrivals were placed in their hundreds, stowed tier upon tier like ships' cargo, each layer of corpses being covered over with a thin layer of soil till the trench was filled to the top. (Armstrong, 2022).

Most of the population was illiterate at the time, so many people's stories and specifics of what happened during these times are lost to history.

Covid (COVID-19) originated in Wuhan, China. There are two conflicting theories on how the disease was first contracted by humans. One is that it originated in a laboratory and an accident caused it to be released into the population, and the other is from human contact with an animal carrier. The disease is known to spread from human-to-human contact or breathing in droplets from an affected person. The disease went undetected at first and quickly spread around the world because of globalization and air travel making it so easy for people from all over the world to travel and interact. (Hao, 2022).

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared a pandemic in March 2020, and governments slowly began imposing quarantines, stay at home orders, and travel bans. The response from governments was not very organized and were imposed at widely varying times

and strengths of response. In April 2020, the U.S. announced Operation Warp Speed to develop a vaccine for COVID-19 as quickly as possible. The first vaccine was available in December of 2020 for emergency use, and doses began being administered. The FDA did not fully approve these vaccines until January of 2022. As of February 2023, there were 755 million cases and 6.8 million people had died from Covid. The world population is eight billion people, meaning close to one-eight of the population had contracted Covid and a very small fraction of the world population died from it. (Northwestern Medicine, 2023).

Comparing these pandemics reveals striking parallels. Both originated in Asia and swiftly disseminated worldwide through human mobility. While the Middle Ages lacked effective medical treatments, the COVID-19 era witnessed remarkable scientific strides, culminating in the rapid development of vaccines within a year. The advent of communication technology facilitated global connectivity, fostering international collaboration and hastening solutions. Yet, when tallying the death toll, the Black Death surpassed COVID-19 by nearly 30-fold. Technological progress likely played a pivotal role in mitigating the latter's global casualties.

In summary, these pandemics left a lasting mark on our world and global populace. While we surely could have done better in our response to COVID-19, the advancements in medical and communication technologies demonstrated their ability in mitigating the impact of a global contagion. These two pandemics, occurring centuries apart, offer insights into the evolution of our capacity to combat such crises through the relentless pursuit of scientific knowledge and the harnessing of modern technology.

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