



Chinese Study Finds Asymptomatic COVID-19 Carriers Might Not Readily Spread the Disease

An interesting study on COVID-19 published in the journal *Respiratory Medicine* suggests that asymptomatic carriers might not spread the disease very effectively after all.



Here's an [interesting study on COVID-19](#) published in the journal *Respiratory Medicine*. The information comes from Chinese researchers working at institutions including The Second School of Clinical Medicine, the Hospital Infection Control Division, the Department of Infectious Disease, the Guangdong Provincial People's Hospital, and the Department of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine — all of these associated with the Guangdong Academy of Medical Sciences.

The researchers wanted to find out how effective asymptomatic carriers of SARS-CoV-2 might be in spreading the virus, a question of extreme relevance due to its relationship to aggressive lockdown policies that have assumed that asymptomatic carriers would spread the virus far and wide. It turns out, according to results obtained from this study, that asymptomatic carriers might not spread the disease very effectively after all.

As background to the research results that were published in May, the researchers noted: "It is debatable whether asymptomatic COVID-19 virus carriers are contagious." They continue, describing their research: "We report here a case of the asymptomatic patient and present clinical characteristics of 455 contacts," as the basis for the study that aimed to understand "the infectivity of asymptomatic carriers."

Study participants were classified into three groups of those exposed to the asymptomatic carrier: "35 patients, 196 family members and 224 hospital staffs." Of these, the patient group had median contact time with the asymptomatic carrier of four days, while the family members group had median contact time for five days, and both patients and family members were medically isolated. Of the patients, 25 percent had preexisting cardiovascular disease.

The authors of the study report: "During the quarantine, seven patients plus one family member appeared new respiratory symptoms, where fever was the most common one. The blood counts in most contacts were within a normal range. All CT images showed no sign of COVID-19 infection. No severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) infections was detected in 455 contacts by nucleic acid test."



Written by [Dennis Behrendt](#) on May 27, 2020

The report's authors note that the hospital environment had instituted strong procedures for thwarting transmission of the virus and that staff and others used personal protective equipment (PPE). But, they noted, these measures would not have been sufficient to prevent the spread of the disease by themselves.

"There is still a risk of transmission of COVID-19 under stringent measures," they noted. "Primarily, shortages of PPE were common in the early stages. Medical resources were supplied to healthcare workers [first]. Due to these factors, patients and attendants can only wear one mask for a long time, resulting in [it being] ineffective. Besides, we noticed that some patients and relatives wore PPE incorrectly due to the lack of adequate training, which was also possible for hospital staffs. Last but not least, it is unavoidable to take off [a] mask while eating or drinking, which provides an opportunity to spread the virus."

They continued: "Considering all the mentioned factors, we suggest that there are more important reasons for achieving 'Zero infection.'"

Their conclusion following their observations?

"Based on the foregoing discussion, we conclude that the infectivity of some asymptomatic SARS-CoV-2 carriers might be weak. This finding implicates that there is not [a need] to worry unduly for asymptomatic or mild patients during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, excessive virus nucleic acid detection is unnecessary, which can relieve the pressure on public health resources. Under the development of epidemic circumstance, [the public is concerned about] the increasing number of asymptomatic or mild patients hid[den] in the community. However, combined with our results and the defense measures currently completed, we hope such worries are misplaced and we also believe the world will win this battle certainly."

Naturally, the observation that this particular study is based on a very small sample of precisely one asymptomatic carrier requires the proviso that more research is required. The researchers note this as well. "The limitation of our study is that there is only one case and lack of detailed information on family members quarantined locally," they pointed out. "Large-scale multicenter studies are needed to verify our conclusion. However, both asymptomatic carrier and 455 contacts were admitted to and treated in designated places. Hence, the study results are representative to some extent."

Suggestive evidence has been accruing that for many reasons the mass home-confinement of much of the world's population has been a disastrously wrong policy. If additional studies provide future additional illumination or confirmation of this one, we will then know conclusively that a key foundational element used to justify the lockdowns was just as wrong as the models that predicted millions of deaths.

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