

Public Health Roundtable with Governor Ron DeSantis (R-FL) by Zoom, The Florida Channel
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Partial transcription by CCHF

HERD IMMUNITY EXPLAINED; SUGGESTION GIVEN

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6P3SkTBfGzU&fbclid=IwAR0i099BpWdk3fSx8UQUcgXQS83sEu2VQiGfMQaS7T2y5PXGOinDUYoFxa0> (starting at about 1:15:00)

Q&A WITH REPORTERS:

Gov. Ron DeSantis relays first reporter's question to Dr. Martin Kulldorff, Professor, Harvard University Medical School: "... Herd immunity . . I think it's being used to say to just do nothing... Can you talk about taking action and where the action's most beneficial?"

Kulldorff:

"Yeah, doing nothing would be terrible. That would lead to many deaths, unnecessary deaths among the elderly. So, the key thing is that we have to do a better job in taking care of the elderly and protecting them through a variety of measures. At the same time that we should let younger people live their lives. That's what makes public health [inaudible] such an approach. In public health, we differentiate who are at the high-risk and who are at the low risk and we have to protect those at high risk. But to do - - to do nothing, that would be a terrible thing. . .

DeSantis:

"Researchers . . . show "most of the transmission occurs in that 20 to 30, 20 to 35 age group, so as more of them get asymptomatic infections, the ability of the virus to reproduce really starts to decline because that's kind of the most active area in society."

Kulldorff:

"So, some people are much more social and have more contacts. So those are the ones who will spread, spread the disease the most. So, when we talk for example, about herd immunity, we don't know what the level is required for herd immunity but it also depends on who gets infected. If a lot of elderly people who live by themselves are infected, that's not going to really help build herd immunity, but if the traveling salesman or the

supermarket clerk or the taxi driver, if they get infected then that really helps building immunity in the community.

“And it’s obvious that in many places of the U.S. we have immunity in the community already building up, and Florida is one example. Whether it has reached the level of herd immunity quite yet that’s hard to tell, but it certainly is a lot of immunity in the community, and we’re sort of well on our way to that point.

DeSantis:

“...Herd immunity implies that the disease is done. But I think the role that population immunity has played thus far in epidemics waning, it doesn’t mean that the disease is gone but it’s been a big factor in driving the reproduction rate below one in a lot of these areas. Would you agree with that?

Kulldorff:

“COVID’s never going to go away for - - It’s not going to be eradicated. So, it’ll be endemic. But - - and we always have new people who are born and they don’t have immunity to it so, in the future I would expect a lot of children are going to get it when they are one, or two, or three years old, where this is not a serious thing.

“But I think the discussion in the Senate was about the New York City and certainly the reason why there are so few cases now is mostly because of immunity. And whether they have reached herd immunity yet, that’s uncertain. My guess is that they may have reached it in the working-class areas but when the rich people come back from the Hamptons and the Berkshires, then they’re going to hang out with each other and then there’s probably going to be cases from that.”

DeSantis: “ ... I think you’ve pointed out, herd immunity is not a strategy, so how would you respond?

Kulldorff:

“It’s a natural-phenomena, that every epidemiologist agrees exists that people reach sooner or later.

“So to call it a strategy would be like to say that an airplane pilot is using gravity as a strategy to land the plane. Obviously, if you’re in the airplane you’re going to eventually hit the ground no matter what. So, the strategy is should you do a soft landing so that everybody survives or are you going to do a crash landing, which is not so good? So you want to utilize gravity, as a pilot, you want to use the gravity in a way that you can safely land the plane, and the same thing with public health. Herd immunity is there. The goal is to minimize the mortality until we reach that stage and the best way to so it is through a vaccine but you . . .

DeSantis:

“... The goal of a vaccine is herd immunity, correct?”

Kulldorff:

“Yes, so for example in measles, which is a very contagious disease, one of the most contagious infectious diseases, we need - - not everybody gets immunized.

“So, there are some people who don’t want to vaccinate their children but they are still protected. Those children are not vaccinated are still protected through herd immunity because almost every child is protected. And there’s also some children who cannot get - - they’re immuno-compromised so they can’t be vaccinated so they’re also protected. The children less than age 12 - - 12 months, they’re not, they can’t get the vaccine because it doesn’t work in the infants. So, they’re also protected through herd immunity.

“So, herd immunity is a situation where those who are vulnerable, in the case of COVID, that’s the elderly, they can be protected because other people are immune even though they themselves never were immune and never were infected.”

EARLIER IN THE INTERVIEW:

Kulldorff:

“What helps the elderly is if the young take this very minimal risk and live normal life until there’s herd immunity and then when we have herd immunity then the old people can also live more normal lives.”

Partial Transcription by Twila Brase, RN, PHN, president and co-founder, Citizens’ Council for Health Freedom