Mask Mandates In Schools

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COVID-19, School Closures, and the Debate Over Masks

Coronavirus started in early 2020, and within months, the whole world was under lockdown. This was the scenario that no one had anticipated, and everyone was ill-prepared for it. Naturally, extreme level of stress and anxiety was observed during the year of the pandemic, so when the time came for the world to re-open, there were a few guidelines given to the public to follow as the pandemic was not completely over. These guidelines were supposed to help keep the spread of the virus under control. It was strictly advised that the schools follow these safety precautions as the safety of students was a high priority. Mandating masks was one of the precautions advised. However, some parents found this was a breach of their freedom and refused to follow the mandate. This not only put their children at risk of contracting the virus; it also placed their peers at risk. This paper will present some cases that prove the mask mandate was effective and discuss the reasons why it should be followed by all the individuals who study or work at schools.

Although the mask mandate should be followed throughout the country as long as the virus persists, if people do not wish to follow these precautions, then at least the students should be kept safe. This is not a violation of anyone's freedom. Rather, it is an attempt to protect them. There is a debate that the mask mandate does not help protect students from Covid-19. However, there is conclusive evidence that this statement is false.

Wisconsin Schools, Cohorting, and the Practical Use of Mask Mandates

In the rural area of Wisconsin, seventeen schools reported that they followed the mask mandate closely and divided the student body into groups so that social distancing could be maintained as well. The schools observed the hybrid teaching model in which one group would attend classes online, and the other group would attend the classes in person. For this reason, the students that attended the school were divided into manageable groups of eleven to twenty students. Everyone was advised to maintain six feet of distance and wear a mask at all times. If there was any sign that the students or staff member had contracted the virus, they were advised to quarantine immediately. The data collected from these seventeen schools were taken over thirteen weeks of in-person learning, and it

showed that out of 4,876 students, only seven got the virus while none of the staff members got the virus. It was also reported that ninety-two per cent of the students wore masks at all times (Falk, 2021).

In Salt Lake, Utah, the COVID-19 test was offered to 1,041 schools, and the test results showed that the virus spread was as low as 0.7 per cent. This was due to strict adherence to the mask mandate; however, the advised distance of six feet was not observed, but it was still followed by keeping the students at least three feet apart. It was reported that everyone followed the mask mandate strictly, proving that the masks helped prevent the spread of the virus, even if social distancing was not observed properly. After these results, it was agreed that the schools would be safe to open if they kept upholding the mask mandate (Hershow, 2021).

Extensive research was conducted by the "ABC Science Collaborative", and the evidence collected showed that the mask mandate had kept the spread of the virus under one per cent. The report states that using the mask has been the most effective preventative measure as many people at that time had not been vaccinated. It was observed that masks helped contain the spread of the virus even in schools that were in poor condition. Data also showed that the schools that did not follow the mask mandate had a higher percentage of the virus spread. This data was collected from thirteen different countries, including the United States, proving that the masks are indeed effective as the data was collected from different schools in different environments (Zimmerman, 2021).

International Evidence and the Effectiveness of Face Coverings

A study conducted by An et al. collected evidence from different countries to observe the efficacy of mask mandate. They reported that even though the masks proved to be the most effective form of prevention, they were the least followed precaution; however, the places that observed the mask mandate showed a lower number of COVID-19 infections. It was also observed that the people who used surgical masks had a better chance of avoiding the virus than those who wore aesthetic or cloth masks. This report cited more articles that had done their studies on the efficacy of the masks, confirming that using masks has been the most effective intervention as compared to other interventions. It was also noticed that the people who followed all the safety precautions were able to avoid the virus more effectively as compared to others. So, layering all the precautions helped prevent the infection efficiently. It was declared that long-term precautions are still going to be vaccines; however, mask mandates can help contain the spread. The study further analyzed the response of different governments in enforcing the mask mandates, observing that the governments that were slow to enforce the mask mandates in places like schools and offices reported more COVID-19 cases (An et al., 2021).

These cases and studies prove that preventative measures such as mask mandates are extremely important in protecting students from the COVID-19 virus. However, other factors make the mask

mandate extremely important. The first is that many people suffer from immunodeficiency disorder, and even in normal circumstances, these people are always at risk of contracting a disease, but during the COVID-19 pandemic, these people are suffering the most as they are not capable of fighting the virus. The least we can do is use a mask to protect them from getting sick. Masks should be used to protect not only ourselves but also others. The second reason is that we may not even know that we have the virus, so wearing a mask will prevent us from spreading it further.

It is not too much to ask that people be considerate of others and wear a mask so that the virus can be contained as quickly as possible. The fact that the anti-mask debate even exists is absurd. It is unfortunate that people will readily believe in conspiracies over scientific facts and bring in their rights in such a simple matter. People should know that not everything is a conspiracy or government agenda, and these mandates are advised to protect their rights. Masks should be used everywhere, not just in schools, as it protects everyone from getting the virus. The cases discussed prove that the masks work as a preventative measure and have helped in preventing the virus from spreading and getting out of control. Being considerate of other people does not rob you of your rights; it just makes you a better person. It is unclear why there is such strong opposition to wearing masks; the only conclusion that can be deduced is that there may be a lack of information. The people who are campaigning against masks should be educated so that they know that their stance is selfish and puts other people in danger along with themselves.

References

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