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## Trump and Covid



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It had to happen.

Refusing to wear a mask because it wouldn't make him look macho, conducting rallies with supporters packed together, exposing himself in the White House where many unmasked come and go daily and winding up in the hospital with the coronavirus: an October surprise.

And so it goes, to borrow from author Kurt Vonnegut.

President Donald Trump, pictured wearing a mask while leaving the White House, entered Walter Reed National Military Medical Center Friday evening reportedly as an “abundance of caution,” for an unknown length of stay.

Saturday was confusion day at the hospital, with his White House doctor, Sean P. Conley, telling reporters the president had been diagnosed with COVID-19 three days earlier, which would mean Thursday. Did he know he had the disease yet went anyway that night to a fundraiser at his Bedminster, N.J., golf club, exposing people to infection?

“We’re 72 hours into the diagnosis,” Conley said.

Trump’s chief of staff, Mark Meadows, mistakenly recorded in what were to be off the record comments, said later, “The president’s vitals over the last 24 hours were very concerning and the next 48 hours will be critical in terms of his care. We’re still not on a clear path to recovery.”

After four years of Trump and White House, lying who knows what to believe. He was reported as having tweeted optimistic comments about his recovery and urging Congress to pass another virus relief bill. But for all anyone knows it could have been one of his aides with access to his Twitter account.

And now? No campaigning less than a month before the Nov. 3 election, possibly no second debate with his opponent Democrat Joe Biden, scheduled for Oct. 15. Certainly no rallies. But he’ll be getting lots of headline attention anyway because he’s the president and is in the hospital.

Will Vice President Mike Pence take over presidential duties? And what of the hotly contested election? Will Trump be recovered by then?

He’s 74. The virus and COVID are not kind to elderly men, And White House staff members privately told *The New York Times* “that the president has some underlying conditions that could make him more susceptible to a severe bout of the virus.” They reportedly include high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

Graham Snyder, medical director of hospital epidemiology at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, told The Washington Post Friday, “Age is very clearly the strongest predictor of not doing well with the virus. The likelihood of him developing symptoms, including death, is most strongly predicated on his age.”

“It’s hard to imagine this doesn’t end his hopes for re-election,” Republican consultant Rob Stutzman told the Times.

And only hours before the announcement that Trump contracted the virus and would be quarantined in the White House with his wife Melania, who also was bitten by the disease, he told a rally “the end of the pandemic is in sight.” No it’s not, and there are surges of the virus nationwide. It’s not much of a “hoax” now.

Their teen son Barron reportedly tested negative for the virus.

COVID-19 already has killed at least 208,000 Americans and infected about 7.2 million, according to the Post. Nearly 80 percent of those who have died were 65 or older, it said.

“Going into crowds unmasked and all the rest was sort of a brazen invitation for something like this to happen, sad that it did, but nonetheless, hopeful that it will be a saner approach to what this virus is all about,” Pelosi told MSNBC Friday.

There’s no cure and a vaccine may not be ready until the middle of next year, despite what Trump declared would be available by the election. And winter is coming, meaning cold weather in which the flu thrives that scientists warn could bring more COVID surges.

Trump, who has been trailing in the polls against Biden since April, must be angry at having contracted the disease. He has been waging a bitter campaign against Biden, mocking him like a bully during the first debate, if you can call that disgusting display a debate, for wearing a mask when the former vice president appeared before smaller crowds, saying he couldn’t attract bigger ones like his own. Those reduced appearances before small audiences are meant to avoid catching the virus.

Biden pulled all negative campaign ads against Trump as a gesture of sympathy toward the president.

There’s an irony connected with Trump contracting the virus. He dismissed the seriousness of the disease from the very beginning even though he acknowledged to journalist Bob Woodward that he was briefed on its deadly impact, knowing it was serious and it can kill.

He hid that information from the American people, telling us it will just go away. (“One day – it’s like a miracle – it will disappear.”) Indeed. He has been pressing repeatedly for states to do more to open their businesses and schools despite indications that the virus has done everything but vanish. Now he knows for sure.

It is what it is, as Trump is fond of saying.

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# COUNTERPUNCH