

Correspondence

Redefining public health and sustainable economy: Covid-19 from pandemic to endemic

ABSTRACT

With the recent claim that the maintenance of population immunity will not depend on continued vaccinations but on the endemic presence of the virus, the proper understanding of the value of public health allows us to configure human living conditions as it thrives in a world where the novel Corona Virus Disease in 2019 (Covid-19) becomes endemic. World leaders and economic managers need to redefine public health not just as a means that enables economic productivity but as a substantially primordial goal—an end that every functional society must achieve via living an economically sustainable lifestyle. This paper argues that economic and societal sustainability thus must be framed and delimited within the human ecological boundary—a crucial viewpoint that could sustain public health amid a Covid-19 endemic world while preventing another viral pandemic from occurring.

Keywords Covid-19 endemic, ecosystem, public health, sustainable economy, symbiotic relationship

Now that some highly developed free-market economies are currently lifting the Covid-19 restriction, attaining normalcy sooner could be nearing. As of 13 July 2021, Our World in Data (OWID) reported that 25.6% of the world population had received at least one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine.¹ At the very least, the worldwide vaccination program spurned the severe effect of the virus on humans. There is even a plan to consider an annual Covid-19 vaccination booster to keep new Covid-19 variants standstill. It is apt to say this time that the said vaccination program's positive turnout and everyone's collective effort embodied hope for a new normal world.² But, achieving a Covid-19-free world seemed like wishful thinking. Immunologists, infectious diseases researchers and virologists, instead, thought that the coronavirus would become endemic. A recent paper, interestingly, claimed that 'the maintenance of population immunity will not depend on continued vaccinations but the endemic presence of (the virus).'³ Such a point of view could propel world leaders and economic managers to define public health not just as a means that enables economic productivity. Instead, this paper argues that public health is a substantially primordial goal, why, in the first place, the economy has to be sustainable. Meaning, public health is an end that every functional society must achieve via living an economically sustainable lifestyle.

Proper understanding of the value of public health allows us to configure human living conditions as it thrives in

a Covid-19 endemic world. Such an issue has compelled humankind to re-evaluate how we conduct business and carry out daily activities.⁴ Unfortunately, we define a sustainable economy as the ability to harness the earth. We convert the natural world for man's consumption, thereby confusing order in the ecological world and jeopardized public health. Since time immemorial, human beings 'wage' a decisive battle against our natural finiteness. Via harnessing our human nature, we venture a journey to create an anthropocentric world, however synthetic it may be. Such a perspective viewed non-humans as either medium to be used (or abused) or as a threat to human existence. In the hope to maximize the utilization-ability of things for the benefit of human society, we ended up acknowledging our limitations. Our experience of the coronavirus made us re-acknowledge our genetic limitation. The unnecessary disruptions of the ecology have more detrimental than beneficial effects on us. The truth is that the Covid-19 exposed and reminded human beings of ones' vulnerability. Upon evaluating the impact of the Covid-19 on the individuals' experience, recent literature published in this journal inevitably reveals the virus's detrimental effect on human life.^{5–7} The current circumstance with the Covid-19 devalued the synthetic meaning of modern-day living. Rich and poor alike (vaccinated or not) are not immune from the deadly effect of the virus. Although money may prolong life by providing the current and advanced medical technology, it cannot determine life's terms.

One has to relearn the lesson of symbiotic relationships. Symbiosis connotes a close and long-term biological interaction between two different (unlike) biological organisms—the instinctual need to survive drives the symbiotic relationship.⁸ With the removal of ecological boundaries between human and non-human spaces via disrupting the conserved natural resources in the appearance of scientific exploration, we let the parasitic symbiotic relationship between humans and virus take place. While human beings strive to survive, other beings like viruses also shared the same instinctual struggle. And now human existence is at stake as the novel viral phenomenon continues infecting while instinctually mutating to preserve itself. From an anthropocentric point of view, we are compelled to shift to a cosmo-centric view where humankind has to live with other beings on this planet respectfully. We have been challenged to re-manuever our direction from an abusive to a proper manner of living characterized by an upright and balanced lifestyle.⁹ Humans must mutually share the world alongside the other biological organisms. Despite how we made the world a human-friendly habitat, whether we like it or not, we existed within an ecosystem. Thus, economic and societal sustainability thus must be framed and delimited within the human ecological boundary. In so doing, we could sustain public health amid a Covid-19 endemic world while preventing another viral pandemic from occurring.

Authors' Contributions

All authors contributed to all aspects of the manuscript.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could appear to influence the work reported in this paper.

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<https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdab331>