

[Community Voice](#)

Let's Put COVID-19 In Context

People should be more concerned about the doubling of deaths from influenza and pneumonia.

By [Cliff Slater](#) 6/2/2020

It is time to give some context to the 17 Hawaii COVID-19 deaths of the mostly elderly, the last one of which occurred three weeks ago.

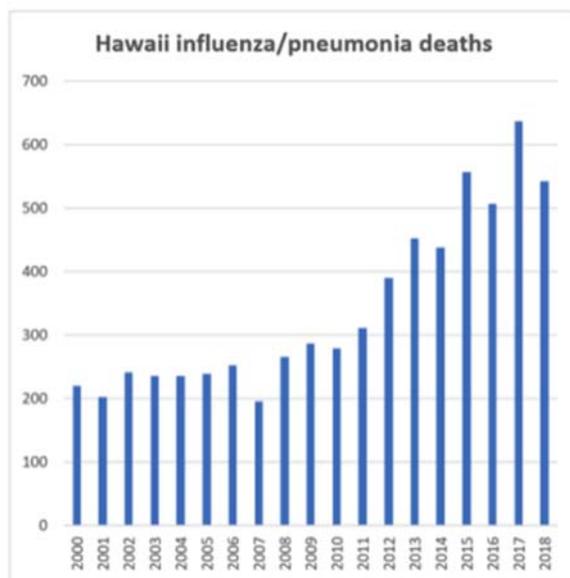
For a start, we can compare it to the influenza/pneumonia deaths in recent years. In 2017 there were 637 deaths, and 542 in 2018. It is far more likely to kill the elderly than does COVID-19.

There are flu shots available now for the flu unlike the COVID-19 virus, for which we hope there will be a vaccine soon. As anyone will tell you that vaccine is the one thing that will allow us all to get back to normal lives.

The trouble with vaccines is that people have to be vaccinated. Only a quarter of those 18-64 years old [get flu vaccinations](#).

Younger people are not as much at risk as seniors, but they are still at risk. Those who are really at risk are the seniors, but only 60 percent of them [get vaccinated](#).

So, what is the chance of the COVID-19 vaccine being the cure-all?



<https://health.hawaii.gov/vitalstatistics/files/2013/05/death00.pdf>

www.livestories.com/statistics/hawaii/influenza-flu-pneumonia-deaths-mortality

But the big issue with the influenza/pneumonia death rate is that it has doubled in the last 10 years while the population has only grown 8%. It has increased from 241 annually during the 2005-2010 period, to 637 in 2017 to 542 in 2018, which means the deaths have more than doubled.

We are now experiencing some 300 more deaths annually from influenza/pneumonia than we did 10 years ago. But the even bigger issue here is that no one appears to have noticed it, let alone be in a panic over it as they are over the deaths from COVID-19.

What is clear is that the public has a skewed understanding of what is at stake in the war against the virus.

First, they have not noticed a doubling of a disease that while it targets the old, does kill more of the younger people than COVID-19. They should be more concerned about the doubling of the influenza/pneumonia deaths than they have been about COVID-19.

Second, they do not realize that, in 2017, 430 [mostly young people](#) in Hawaii were lost to suicides and drug overdose deaths, let alone know that this is going to seriously increase during this severe recession.

Third, they do not realize that without tourism, we don't have an economy.

They think that the state is opening up now, but think again. When restaurants can only use 25% of their seating space, they can't make a profit. When a retail store can only sell 40% of what it used to, it is also losing money.

These businesses are only open because, by doing so, they lose less money than what they would otherwise.

We have to open up to tourism. Even then it will take years to get back to economically viable levels.

There is nonsense going around that this is just pitting profit against lives. First, what profit? Second, on lives, young people are virtually immune to COVID-19 but not to suicide, drug overdosing and other mental issues.

Senior and other vulnerable people should be strongly encouraged to continue sheltering at home. Under those conditions there would be fewer lives lost than from continuing on our present course.

About the Author



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