

## Creating a COVID-19 Vaccine

BY ANNA FRITZE

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, many people have been wondering when we will finally have a vaccine for the disease. While President Trump says that there should be a vaccine by November, scientists disagree, says Dr. Sara Kayat of Al Jazeera. She says, "Most scientists would agree that it is more likely to take 12 to 18 months - and that is providing there are no bumps along the road." This isn't just for coronavirus; this is all viruses and diseases. For those who are informed about the process of creating vaccines, it is not uncommon knowledge that they take longer to create than most people think.

Other countries have helped increase the speed of creating the vaccine. According to The Guardian, "This unprecedented speed is thanks in large part to early Chinese efforts to sequence the genetic material of Sars-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. China shared that sequence in early January, allowing research groups around the world to grow the live virus and study how it invades human cells and makes people sick." Currently, 35 companies and institutions are working to create the vaccine, four believe they are ready for animal testing, and one will be entering human trial imminently.

The vaccine entering human trials will have to go through three phases, says Dr. Kayat. Phase one includes about 100 participants, and usually takes several months by itself. Phase two involves several hundred participants, and scientists further observe the efficacy of the vaccine. This can last from several months to several years. The third and final phase includes thousands of people across several medical facilities. This final phase looks at the efficacy of the vaccine against the disease over long periods of time and can last several years.

Regarding the development of a vaccine, The Guardian says, "Traditionally, immunization has been achieved using live, weakened forms of the virus, or part or whole of the virus once it has been inactivated by heat or chemicals." These methods have some disadvantages because the form of the virus has been weakened or is only a part for the majority of the time testing, the virus can become stronger when it is living inside an actual host. While the way to fix this would be increasing the vaccine, it does not always work.

Right now, it does not look like there is a vaccine in the very near future, as the coronavirus is still so new. In the meantime, we can continue to do our best to be safe and keep others safe by washing our hands, staying home, and saving lives.

## Distance Learning in Minnesota

BY ANNA FRITZE

One of the biggest challenges people are facing with the coronavirus pandemic is schooling. To keep students safe, all schooling has been transferred from face-to-face to online. Concordia is believed to have a pretty good setup for online schooling with Blackboard Collaborate, but even with our technological advantages, switching to online is tough. We are adults, and it's tough to learn this way. So, what about children in grade school and even high school? Minnesota understands that this could be an issue, and school systems are doing their best right now to figure out the best approach for moving schools online.

Online schooling began as what was believed to be a short closure. Governor Tim Waltz at first said that there would be no closing down of schools; three days later, he announced a mandatory eight-day closure for all schools. At this point, educators knew that they had to prepare to help children through this odd process. Not only was school being moved online, but there was also the issue of health-care workers needing child care, and many families relied on school meals for their children. Because of this, meals are still being provided for children who need them, and schools are required to provide child care for children 12 and under.

While moving school to home would require a lot of online learning, some teachers are looking for different ways to educate. MinnPost quotes Superintendent Brian Shanks of the Alden-Conger School District, saying, "We're looking at old-school methods of providing education." Shanks explained that this could include dropping off homework and picking up assignments via school bus drivers, as well as daily phone check-ins between students and teachers. This could help students feel a little more sense of normalcy.

While this old-school method has a want to be applied, students still do the majority of their work online. According to the Minnesota Department of Education, online learning is not new. They say, "Online learning is not a new educational delivery model, but it is one that is different than what most students experience in a bricks-and-mortar classroom. Approved public online programs provide information to orient students and parents to the world of online learning, and [...] technologies and people are in place to help students reach their educational goals." Hearing this is a comfort. It is the hope that the education system is taking extra care to pay attention to students and their parents and helping in every way possible.

## Gun Sales Surge in Minnesota and Across the Country

BY HALLE MARTIN

As fears began circulating around the coronavirus, toilet paper, canned goods, and hand sanitizer flew off the shelves as consumers started a spree of panic buying. What initially seemed like bizarre doomsday preparation has turned into the new normal. Now, quarantine essentials have surpassed paper products and non-perishables as many Americans have begun investing in self-defense.

Across the nation, there have been reports of increased gun sales and permit applications. The FBI reported a record-breaking day on March 21st, conducting 210,000 background checks, and FBI data is showing over two-million gun purchases in March.

To legally purchase a gun, one must have obtained a permit to carry or a permit to purchase. MPR has reported a thirty-five percent increase in gun permits sought during the first three months of the year, according to Minneapolis police, while Brooklyn Park reports a 200 percent increase in purchase applications just for March.

Typically, surges like these follow mass shootings or democratic elections, but with the current pandemic, Americans fear for their safety and their freedom. With shelter-in-place orders, some are worried that their second-amendment rights could be next to go, while others fear that police forces may start to diminish, and civilians may have to take matters into their own hands with rising fears regarding civil unrest.

Gun stores are seeing unusually high traffic coming through the doors and are struggling to assist customers and restock shelves due to COVID-19 related layoffs and absences. Some shops have been forced to shut down and move to online sales under government restrictions, while others are carrying on as essential businesses. Though many gun shops are still open, shooting ranges have closed. This is especially concerning as first-time gun owners account for most of the surging gun sales.

The National Rifle Association has directed first-time gun owners to their YouTube channel where they offer introductory videos on gun safety, including maintenance and storage. Officials are reminding gun owners to proceed with caution. Guns should be safely secured and stored away. Having guns in your home leads to higher chances of suicide and domestic violence, and improperly stored guns are more likely to be stolen than used in self-defense.

Tensions are high, children are home from school, and medical centers are already struggling to keep up. With this in mind, please make sure that you are taking extra precautions if you are considering buying a gun or have guns at home.