

# What Ethical Choices Do We Face as a Consequence of The COVID-19 Pandemic?

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In my *presentation* I will highlight some of the ethical questions that are now being debated actively by leaders in various fields as well as by ordinary citizens who must make decisions based upon conflicting concerns. As the likelihood of a “second wave” of COVID-19 appears to be increasing, we should strive to have a consensus on the ethics of certain choices we will be required to make and on what public policies will best support these decisions. For example, Paul Romer, a Nobel Prize-winning economist (and NYU colleague), envisions a day when all Americans are tested regularly for COVID-19, and they present proof when dining out or visiting a dentist. A position like this may be supported in some cultural communities, in East Asia for example, but seen as a serious abridgment of personal rights and freedoms in others, perhaps in the United States. As Michael Osterholm, Director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota, has said, “we have the potential here to go through days we have not seen since World War II. ... As a nation, we will not be ready.” Since the pandemic is global public policies should be coordinated internationally in the interest of everyone. Brian David Johnson, Director of the Threatcasting Lab at Arizona State University puts it: “What we’re experiencing is a massive global destabilization of all our systems, we actually don’t know all the damage that has happened. We’re on life support, globally.” Since we are facing the probability that global institutions, community standards and individual lifestyles, which were all thought to be reliable expressions of the normal, may disappear, we need a clear basis for making the ethical choice that will be imperative as we all go forward.