

Narratives on face mask wearing from members of Navigating Knowledge Landscapes Network - the contribution No. 23

Country: **TURKEY**

Melike Şahinol

Orient-Institut Istanbul (Turkey), Research Area “Human, Medicine and Society”

E-mail: sahinol@oiist.org

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Part 1: The distribution of free masks began at the end of January, as measures at the Airports on January 24 began with infrared scans, disinfection of all customs gates, distribution of free masks and instruction leaflets. On April, 3rd, Turkey’s president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated in his press release that the curfew was imposed for those born on January 1, 2000 and above, that it was obligatory to wear masks when shopping or visiting public places, and that entry and exit to 30 metropolitan and Zonguldak was stopped for 15 days. The same day, Istanbul and Ankara Metropolitan Municipalities announced that a free mask will be distributed to the public after the ban on traveling without a mask in public transportation. On April, 6th, president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announced in his statement that the sale of masks has been banned to the public (the state would provide the households with masks). On April, 9th it was announced that free mask distribution in Istanbul will be made through pharmacies. On May, 6th Minister Koca explained that citizens will need masks urgently, that more than 40 million people have accessed an application, which includes the free delivery of a pack of 5 masks every 10 days, and the distribution of 160 million masks has been distributed already. He stated that there will be more citizens who may need more during the “period of freedom” (outside the curfew for elderly), even though this is limited, and that it is possible for people to buy surgical masks from many places including pharmacies, markets, medical stores, provided that they have a ceiling price. On May 7th ceiling price of surgical masks was determined as ₺1. It was explained with a published guide that barbers, hairdressers and beauty salons will not accept customers without masks and appointments in the process, and there will be no people other than customers and employees at work.

Part 2: As soon as I leave the house and find myself in the supermarket or in public places, I wear a mask. However, I do not wear a mask when I take a walk in the forest. I started wearing it even before it became mandatory. I think it is important to wear masks, especially to avoid endangering others, e.g. elderly people.

Part 3: I find it unspeakable when people who wear masks are ridiculed by those who do not wear masks. At least that's what happened to me in the beginning, before the mask duty. This was especially the case, as there was irritation among the population regarding the wearing of masks. Many thought that the people wearing masks would want to protect themselves in particular. Very few thought that people wearing masks wanted to protect their social environment.

Part 4 (optional): I am very glad that the mask duty came so early. However, this then led to people becoming a little more relaxed in dealing with physical distancing, so that people began to be less careful. People have started leaving the house more carefree. So the willingness to take risks has increased with the rise of the mask duty. There were less information with regards to masks having to be changed regularly, as they become damp and thus less protection might be provided. Particularly in the case of self-made masks, there are no instructions on how to use a protective mask correctly. Then I could see some reports in the media that certain types of beards or facial hair could make masks less effective. This has been little communicated. So the correct use of masks and their care to ensure a certain level of protection has not been sufficiently communicated. I think this has to do with medical standards.