

Narratives on face mask wearing from members of Navigating Knowledge Landscapes Network - the contribution No. 20

Country: **SOUTH KOREA**

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Part 1:

(i) Mask purchase 5-day rotation system: In order to provide fair chance for purchasing the protective mask, days are assigned depending on the end of birth year. As demand for masks skyrockets due to a surge in confirmed patients of COVID-19, a 5-day rotation mask distribution system for purchasing public mask is implemented. The 5-day rotation mask distribution system enables individuals to purchase the mask only on a specified day, based on the last number of your birth year. Based on the last number of the birth year, Mondays are for 1 & 6, Tuesdays 2 & 7, Wednesdays 3 & 8, Thursdays 4&9, Fridays 5 & 0 and Saturdays and Sundays are available for purchase by those who have not purchased during the week.

(ii)ask notification app: The location of protective mask vendors, status of stocks, and arrival times are provided real-time, with the developed app taking advantage of public data.

Part 2: Personally, I'm familiar with wearing a mask, and I'd like to wear it in order not to harm other people, as I may be a potential patient.

At first when Koreans wear masks due to serious dust, there were discussions about wearing masks for the following reasons. (This was voluntarily worn by individuals who were not directed by the government.): First, people wearing masks are too obsessed with health. Second, only you want to be healthy.

Part 3: In Korea, it is common to wear a mask to keep the cold from getting worse in the winter and to prevent the spread of cold to others. Also, as the yellow dust from China and fine dust became much severe, it was common for many people, especially children, to wear masks even before the corona crisis. For this reason, many families even had a lot of masks in their homes before the corona crisis.

Part 4:

- Sexism on Covid-19: Medical equipment is tailored to men's bodies at medical sites, so it doesn't fit women's bodies. So women who work in the medical field are at risk of infection.
- The principle that we shouldn't harm others is the same, but the way how we keep it has changed. For example, in the past, masks were never worn to avoid harming other people (ie, to prevent the virus from spreading).
- Emergency disaster relief funds: Buying local helps the local economy, and small businesses are more susceptible during financial crisis. In Korea, governments issued funds which can only be used in local areas to help local economy
- Keeping social distance while wearing masks: even with wearing masks, there is a slight chance of virus infection due to poor fit, etc. With social distancing in public transportation and shops, the chance of getting infected would be much lower.
- Remote working: Chances of coronavirus infection is higher in confined spaces, such as office buildings and transportation services. In order to further prevent the spread of virus, staying home unless in urgent situation.
- Disclosure of Information and Minorities: In Korea, government releases information in order to let people know if they were in the vicinity of the infected person. Sharing such information publicly helps create social awareness about the virus, but it has privacy concerns, especially for the social minorities such as gay community. During the recent outbreak of one of the well-known gay clubs in Korea, individuals who visited such places chose not to reveal their identities, due to fear of hatred against them, making quarantine process problematic. As a conclusion, during the outbreak, keeping unnecessary hatred under control is important.

References

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