



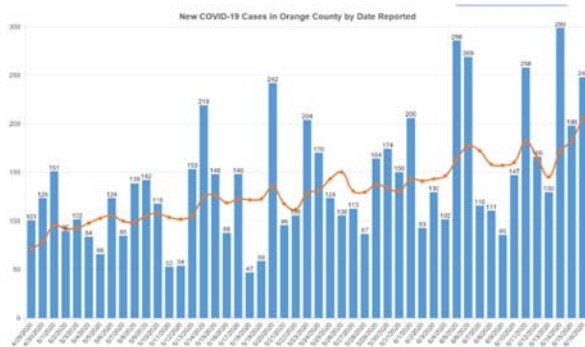
June 17, 2020

To: Distribution

From: Pandemic Working Group

Re: **COVID-19: OC ~ Dexamethasone ~ NBA Pt. II ~ Tomes Make a Comeback**

Orange County. Here in the OC, the pandemic trend has assumed an upward direction. As per the county's Department of Public Health (and depicted in its graph below), the infection rate over the past seven days (orange line) has risen sharply. Further, as reported by KCRW.com, hospitalizations have risen, testing has dropped and infection rates per number of tests has risen to 42%. This is occurring while businesses reopen and tension continues between county's public



health officer (who has softened the mandatory face covering order of his predecessor who resigned in the face of threats) and the Board of Supervisors, who, anxious to lift COVID restrictions from local businesses, remain dubious about the strength of the disease and the efficacy of cloth face coverings. This factionalism has also taken hold within the population to a degree. KCRW notes that in some areas, like Santa Ana, most people appear to be wearing masks, while in others, like Huntington Beach, fewer are doing so. With this dynamic, then, it is best continue observing social distancing, particularly when going out into public, as one never knows how one's neighbors may view this pandemic. In fact, this is good advice in most any locale.

Steroids Showing Promise. As reported by the New York Times, scientists at the University of Oxford have reported – and this has not yet gone through peer review – that a common steroid called dexamethasone may reduce deaths in patients with severe COVID-19 symptoms. The drug apparently reduces inflammation caused by the immune system's response. In the study, which was a randomized, controlled clinical trial in which 2,100 severely ill patients were given dexamethasone and 4,300 patients were given the usual care, the dexamethasone group showed 1/3 fewer deaths among patients on ventilators and one-fifth fewer deaths among patients on oxygen. In light of recent retractions and walk-backs on coronavirus treatments, study authors are not yet claiming victory here. Nevertheless, as Dr. Atul Gawande, surgeon and author (not of this study) stated, "It would be great news if dexamethasone . . . really does cut deaths by 1/3 in ventilated patients." The drug has been around for more than 50 years, is widely used for lupus, arthritis, allergies and cancers and costs less than one dollar per day for a single treatment.

The NBA Experiment. Remember our story on plans by the National Basketball Association to finish out its 2019-2020 season in a controlled environment on Disney properties in Orlando, Florida? As a follow-up from the Wall Street Journal, the NBA has published a 113-page manual for all 22 participating teams in order to impose strict protocols on the proceedings. The controls are many – all players self-isolate upon arrival, receive regular infection and temperature tests, are sequestered in Disney hotels and are to maintain social distance – including, no doubles when playing table tennis. Off-duty players may watch other teams play in otherwise empty arenas, thus attaining the status of the world's most athletic spectators. Coaches are encouraged to wear masks, which I imagine players would love to see even after the pandemic is over. And, if any player tests positive for coronavirus, he will be sent to Isolation Housing until he shows two consecutive negative tests. Presumably, this will be a kind of exilic condition in a really nice place with nothing to do. With play commencing in early July, the eyes of the world are also upon the state of Florida, which, along with Texas and Arizona (as reported by MSNnews.com), reported the highest single-day increase for new infections during the past week. In spite of these trends, however, the NBA is making every effort to ensure that its teams can operate safely within a bubble so that this professional sport may distinguish itself as being the first to restart amid the pandemic.

Pandemic Reading. Today, the Wall Street Journal carried a piece on how some safer-at-home citizens are turning to lengthy novels (including ones that they could never complete before) during the pandemic. Seventeen days into lockdown, after rearranging his spice cabinet, baking sourdough bread, installing kitchen lighting and finding nothing left on his to-do list, a labor lawyer from New York picked up Tolstoy's "War and Peace" for the third time in his life – and now he has the time. Indeed, titles such as "Ulysses," and "Middlemarch" are starting to sell again. I myself – get this – downloaded the collected works of Fyodor Dostoevsky from Amazon for just 99 cents. That's right – "The Brothers Karamazov," "Crime and Punishment" and "Notes from the Underground" among others. And I'm not even working remotely. So, for all of you Russian novel enthusiasts out there – run, don't walk, to your iPad. This is a crazy deal. - TD

If you have any questions or comments on this advisory, please contact either [kellyw@amvac.com](mailto:kellyw@amvac.com) or [timd@amvac.com](mailto:timd@amvac.com).