

Testing blunders created crippled virus response

Many still cannot get tested

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Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A series of missteps at the nation’s top public health agency caused a critical shortage of reliable laboratory tests for the coronavirus, hobbling the federal response as the pandemic spread across the country like wildfire, an Associated Press review found.

President Donald Trump assured Americans early this month that the COVID-19 test developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is “perfect” and that “anyone who wants a test can get a test.” But more than two months after the first U.S. case of the new disease was confirmed, many people still cannot get tested.

In the critical month of February, as the virus began taking root in the U.S. population, CDC data shows government labs processed 352 COVID-19 tests — an average of only a dozen per day.

“You cannot fight a fire blindfolded,” Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, head of the World Health Organization, said at a recent briefing. “We cannot stop this pandemic if we don’t know who is infected.”

The Department of Health and Human Services, which includes the CDC, has begun an internal review to assess its own mistakes. But outside observers and federal health officials have pointed to four primary issues that together hampered the national response — the early decision not to use the test adopted by the World Health Organization, flaws with the more complex test developed by the CDC, government guidelines restricting who could be tested and delays in engaging the private sector to ramp up testing capacity.

Combined with messaging from the White House



A technician prepares COVID-19 coronavirus patient samples for testing at a laboratory in New York’s Long Island.

John Minchillo/AP Photo

minimizing the disease, that fueled a lackluster response that missed chances to slow the spread of the virus, they said.

“There were many, many opportunities not to end up where we are,” Dr. Ashish K. Jha, the director of the Global Health Institute at Harvard, told the AP. “Basically, they took this as business as usual. ... And that’s because the messaging from the White House was ‘this is not a big deal, this is no worse than the flu.’ So that message basically created no sense of urgency within the FDA or the CDC to fix it.”

Even as private labs have been cleared by government regulators to process tens of thousands of additional tests in the last two weeks, experts warn that the nation is still falling well short of enough testing capacity to keep ahead of the highly contagious virus. And it can often take a week just to get results back.

Trump last week rated his administration’s response to the crisis as a perfect 10. However, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said the CDC’s system wasn’t designed to test for and track a widespread outbreak, which he characterized as “a failing.”

In interviews with the AP, two federal health officials with direct knowledge of the situation said CDC experts don’t know why many of the agency’s test kits failed to reli-

ably detect the virus. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about what went wrong.

J. Stephen Morrison, a health policy expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, called the testing issues a “debacle,” contributing to what he described as a confused and delayed federal response to the crisis.

As a result, he said, the CDC has now been marginalized within the White House — a worrisome development.

“CDC has generally been regarded as the best in the game,” Morrison said. “I don’t think they anticipated the technical difficulty, or the speed with which the virus has been moving. The virus was racing out ahead of them.”

On New Year’s Eve, Chinese scientists informed the World Health Organization about a cluster of 27 pneumonia cases of unknown cause in the industrial megapolis of Wuhan that they linked to the city’s wholesale fish market. Less than two weeks later, the Chinese had sequenced the virus’ genetic makeup and shared it with the world.

Within days, German scientists had developed a test that could identify a unique part of the virus’ DNA. The WHO quickly adopted the German test, publishing technical guidelines on Jan. 17 and working with private companies to produce testing kits.

College: Enrollment is holding steady for now but could drop

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the emergency declaration to make some funding decisions — signing off on certain grants, for example — and to reassign some college employees. While some employees are able to work from home, others have jobs that would not translate off campus or to online classrooms.

“Rather than lay those

folks off, we know there are things that need to be done at the college,” Breitmeyer told the board.

Robert Duehmig, the board chairman, said the board has faith in Breitmeyer.

“I think our primary goal is to make sure we can offer everything we need to, to our students,” he said.

The college is still solidifying how it will offer

online coursework to students.

Breitmeyer said Friday that enrollment is holding steady for now but could drop. He expects they will lose some students in career technical education courses since those courses may be more difficult to offer or replicate in an online format. The college is looking at possibly delaying the timeline on those classes.

SPORTS



Fresno State University

Seaside's Maddi Utti, the Mountain West Player of the Year for the 2019-20 season.

Seaside's Utti is best in the Mountain West

The Astorian

Like other professional, college and high school basketball players throughout the country, Maddi Utti’s junior season at Fresno State came to a premature end earlier this month.

After winning the regular season Mountain West conference championship, Boise State beat the Bulldogs 80-76 in the conference championship game March 12 in Las Vegas.

Fresno State was awaiting selection on March 15, when the remainder of the season (including Fresno State’s post-season) was cancelled by the coronavirus outbreak.

By winning the Mountain West regular season title, the Bulldogs had earned the conference’s automatic bid to the Women’s National Invitation Tournament.

Individually at least, the season ended on a bright note for Utti, the 2017 graduate of Seaside High School.

Utti scored 16 points in the loss to Boise State, enough to eclipse the 500-point mark (509) for the season.

After one of the best conference seasons in program history (25-7 overall, 16-2 in conference),



Fresno State University

Seaside's Maddi Utti, left center, played a big part in leading Fresno State to the Mountain West regular season championship.

the Bulldogs earned nine postseason league honors, their most ever in a single season.

Topping the list was Utti, who became Fresno State’s second player to win the conference Player of the Year award, and the first to win it outright.

Averaging a double-double during the conference season (15.4 points/10.0 rebounds), Utti also earned a spot on the All-MW team after being honorable mention last year, and was selected to the All-Defensive team for a second consecutive season.

Meanwhile, Fresno State was one of only two teams in the country, along with Oregon, to have three players average at least 15 points per game.

Among her other accomplishments, Utti was the only player in the Mountain West to rank in the top five in conference scoring (fourth), rebounding (third) and steals (first). She was fifth in field goal percentage (49.8%), first in defensive rebounds (7.4) and fifth in offensive rebounds (2.6).

She ranked second in league games with eight double-doubles, and was the only player under 6-foot with more than five.

Three of Utti’s double-doubles came in three straight games in which the Bulldogs had to overcome fourth-quarter deficits to win.

The former Gull also posted four straight games with at least 15 rebounds from Jan. 4-18.

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SEVEN-DAY FORECAST FOR ASTORIA

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
49 35	50 39	48 40	51 41	52 41	53 40	53 39
A little morning rain	A passing shower	An afternoon shower	Periods of rain	Cloudy, rain possible	Chance of rain	Cloudy, rain possible

ALMANAC

Astoria through Sunday

Temperatures

High/low	48/32
Normal high/low	54/40
Record high	65 in 1915
Record low	28 in 2001

Precipitation

Sunday	Trace
Month to date	1.98"
Normal month to date	5.43"
Year to date	27.02"
Normal year to date	23.07"

Forecasts and graphics provided by
AccuWeather, Inc. ©2020

UNDER THE SKY

Tonight's Sky: Difficult to observe, Mercury at greatest elongation west of 9 degrees.

Source: Jim Todd, OMSI

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	7:10 a.m.
Sunset tonight	7:34 p.m.
Moonrise today	7:47 a.m.
Moonset today	8:01 p.m.

New	First	Full	Last
Mar 24	Apr 1	Apr 7	Apr 14

TODAY'S TIDES

Astoria / Port Docks	Time	High (ft.)	Time	Low (ft.)
2:20 a.m.	7.8	8:32 a.m.	1.1	
2:21 p.m.	7.6	8:41 p.m.	0.6	
Cape Disappointment				
1:57 a.m.	7.6	7:42 a.m.	1.3	
1:56 p.m.	7.6	7:55 p.m.	0.8	
Hammond				
2:06 a.m.	8.0	8:01 a.m.	1.1	
2:08 p.m.	7.9	8:11 p.m.	0.6	
Warrenton				
2:15 a.m.	8.2	8:16 a.m.	1.2	
2:16 p.m.	8.0	8:25 p.m.	0.7	
Knappa				
2:57 a.m.	8.1	9:33 a.m.	0.9	
2:58 p.m.	7.8	9:42 p.m.	0.6	
Depoe Bay				
1:11 a.m.	7.8	7:10 a.m.	1.5	
1:11 p.m.	7.9	7:23 p.m.	0.8	

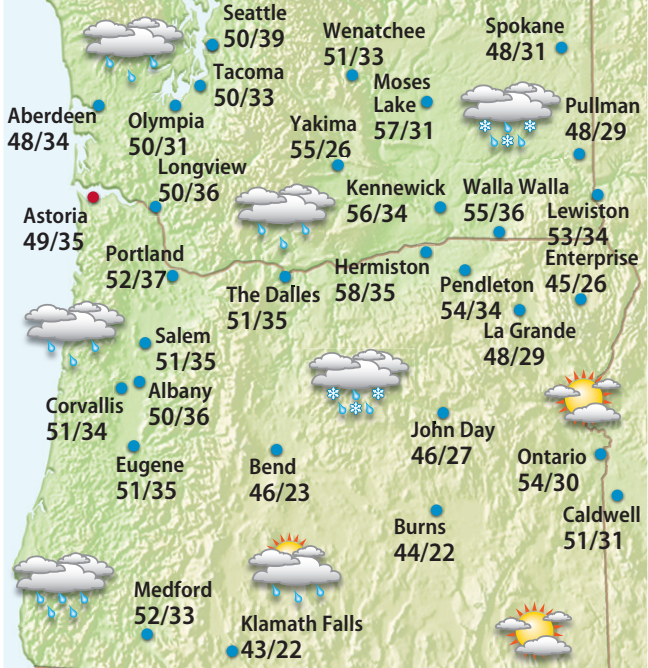
NATIONAL CITIES

City	Today Hi/Lo/W	Wed. Hi/Lo/W
Atlanta	74/63/sh	78/53/pc
Boston	52/38/pc	45/38/r
Chicago	47/39/r	58/46/pc
Dallas	82/55/pc	86/64/s
Denver	61/36/s	62/32/pc
Honolulu	79/69/pc	79/69/sh
Houston	86/67/c	91/68/pc
Los Angeles	63/49/sh	60/44/c
Miami	86/72/s	89/70/s
New York City	57/44/pc	48/42/r
Phoenix	78/56/s	76/55/pc
San Francisco	58/45/r	57/43/sh
Wash., DC	61/46/pc	54/43/r
Weather (W): s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, l-ice.		

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REGIONAL FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



City	Today Hi/Lo/W	Wed. Hi/Lo/W	City	Today Hi/Lo/W	Wed. Hi/Lo/W
Baker City	50/23/pc	48/20/pc	North Bend	50/38/r	50/36/pc
Brookings	48/37/r	50/37/pc	Roseburg	53/36/r	54/35/pc
Ilwaco	48/37/r	49/41/c	Seaside	48/35/r	49/39/pc
Newberg	50/34/r	51/31/sh	Springfield	50/37/r	51/33/sh
Newport	48/35/r	48/36/sh	Vancouver	50/36/r	52/34/c