



COVID may be here to stay: Focus on 'harm reduction,' says doctor

Elissa Salamy

September 3rd 2021

Some doctors and scientists say COVID-19 may eventually become endemic - meaning it will become a part of normal life similar to the flu and the common cold.

Dr. Jeffrey Singer from the CATO Institute recently published an article delving into the two schools of thought when it comes to battling Coronavirus: a zero-tolerance policy, or harm reduction.

“When it comes to zero tolerance in terms of COVID, that's trying to eradicate the virus by keeping restrictions in place until we see virtually no cases, and that's just not realistic,” said Dr. Jeffrey Singer to The National Desk’s Jan Jeffcoat. “We've only eradicated one virus in human history and that was smallpox, and that took 200 years.”

Dr. Singer says restrictions and lockdown measures can harm some groups of people worse than getting COVID-19. Instead, he says we should focus on harm reduction.

“The most effective way of doing that of course is immunization,” said Dr. Singer. “By vaccinating people we're reducing the risk of spread of the virus, but we're also reducing the chances that if anybody catches a virus, they'll get very seriously sick.”

Dr. Singer says he thinks that one restriction - masking up - won't necessarily be here to stay.

“We haven't been wearing face masks over the years when we get outbreaks of the flu or bad colds,” said Dr. Singer. “A very large randomized control trial came out and told us cloth masks don't seem to have any effect and surgical masks do have a mild effect, about an 11% reduction in your chance of getting COVID.”

While getting vaccinated is important in stopping the spread, Dr. Singer says he believes that vaccine mandates should be avoided.

“It's hard to morally justify forcibly vaccinating someone,” said Dr. Singer. “On the other hand if private individual businesses, organizations, hospitals, if they set the terms for people to do

business with them or enter their facility as you need to be vaccinated, that's their moral right as well.”