WHICH IS WHICH?

by:
Ariegn Jhoy O. Lisanin
Teacher I, Mariveles National High School - Cabcaben

The advent of Corona Virus Disease 2019 also known as CoViD19 has shocked the whole humanity. The lives of each and every one have altered in a much unexpected way. The father and mother of each family have suffered with the agonizing moments on how they are going to support the needs of their kids while agitating for the health of their loved ones.

Running your errands at the market is now a great appanage which the wives of the family usually do. But when the modified enhance community quarantine was implemented, the head of the family (usually the husband or father) who has natural stronger immune system than the wife is now the one in-charged to go to the market provided that they have to wear a mask in a scheduled time and day. Various masks were introduced to the public. But first, what is a mask? According to Meriam-Webster Dictionary, a mask is a cover or partial cover for the face used for disguise, a protective covering for the face, a comparable device to prevent exhalation of infectious material. Meanwhile, the DOST defined it as a loose-fitting device that creates a physical barrier to protect the nose and mouth from the entry of any microorganisms in the surroundings. Some were sold on line and some were sold at the market. People don’t really have the proper idea on what mask must be really worn when going to public places. Some of us wear a cloth mask, N95 mask with/without valve, surgical mask, and some have ridiculously wear a literal face mask for a costume party as an improvised because of unavailability of other types of mask. With that, the government was really surprised. The question is what type of mask must be really worn during this pandemic?
A lot of us before have an insufficient amount of resources to provide the needs of our family while having the fact that we can freely work and do our jobs without restrictions. How much more now amidst pandemic that we have limited movement however we have to provide the new normal everyday essentials like face mask, face shield, vitamins, and necklace air purifier (for those who can afford). Considering the availability and cost, most of us usually wear a cloth mask. Trending cloth mask that comes with tour band, pony tail and the cloth mask, low cost yet fashionable indeed. Some wear cloth mask with valve, some use N95 mask with/without valve, some front liners consume the surgical mask.

Which is which? According to the Department of Science and Technology, it is very indispensable to know which mask is appropriate during this pandemic. The reality is that mask were made differently base on its precise purpose. Admit it or not, we are not all aware of that. Now let us talk about it briefly. Cloth mask, from the name itself, it is made of cloth, not fluid resistant, breathable and can be reused. How about the surgical mask? Surgical mask is fluid resistant which gives protection from the respiratory droplets and other hazardous fluids. It is breathable and can’t be reused. Though some used to wash and reuse it without knowing that it will become permeable to harmful particles. Whereas N95 mask reduces the exposure to particulates including small particles aerosols and large droplets (only non-aerosols). It is commonly used in a health care environment such as hospitals and the likes. It is called “N95” because it blocks at least 95% of very small test particles. Some of it has valves which is not advisable to be used because only the wearer is being protected but how if the wearer is infected. The wearer may exhale a contaminated air which can be inhaled by the people around him that may cause for a more severe spread of the virus. Surgical grade N95 without valve gives the wearer and the surrounding people the highest level of protection against the virus infection. This is crucial for the Department of Education to know for us to be aware which type of mask to be recommended for all the employees of the department.
Knowing all these facts, you may now realize which mask is better to use during these times. It is a new normal or a better normal. If you have the resources to buy, why not. But considering that it is a bit pricey, uncomfortable to wear in a long period of time as we have seen some are having rashes, limited in supply presenting the fact that we should spare it for our medical front liners, and its waste effect to the environment. Here is the challenge for us not only for the scientists in the field is to find/discover/invent alternatives to protect ourselves given the fact that it must be low cost and ergonomic while also protecting our mother earth.

Watching the scenarios in the news, some are not really covering the point of entries like the nose and mouth especially when they are having the interview with the reporters which must be also taken into considerations. Evidently, wearing of high quality mask is not enough, it must be worn PROPERLY. The government is also encouraging us to wear face shield as a way of protecting us from the spread of virus.

The discipline and unity of all the people is really a must to surpass this pandemic while having the faith in what our Almighty God can do for some has forgotten to communicate with Him as they have focused on the worldly desires that they have. Books are not the only things that must be read but also the events in our life. Perhaps, this situation is used to change our hearts to be more fearful and prayerful to our omnipotent DIVINE CREATOR who is GREATER than this CoVID19 pandemic.

References:

Merriam-Webster Dictionary