GENT SIDE.

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Coronavirus: Bill Gates Had A Worrisome Prediction In 2015

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At a conference in 2015, Bill Gates anticipated that the next great crisis that would hit the world would be... a highly contagious virus!

'If anything kills over 10 million people in the next few decades, it's more likely to be a highly infectious virus.'

In 2015, at a conference, American billionaire Bill Gates, whose company works on vaccine research, sounded the alarm: 'We are not ready for the next epidemic.' Both for economic reasons and as a result of different political choices, Bill Gates explained the causes of this lack of preparedness. And one thing is sure, we probably should have listened to him.

An economic factor

The first explanation put forward by Bill Gates has to do with the choice of our leaders to embark on what is called 'nuclear deterrence.' That is to say, a huge and very costly nuclear weapons development and armament program, in order to obtain such a nuclear military power that it would make it possible to establish power when it came to international relations.

A system problem

'The problem was not that there was a system that didn't work well enough, the problem was that we didn't have a system at all.' Because of these economic and political choices, Bill Gates explained, through the example of the Ebola virus that hit the African continent in 2013, that no government had invested to create an effective system to prevent and control an epidemic threat.

There were no epidemiologists ready to intervene immediately when the first signs of a virus appeared. No international medical teams were ready to leave and do the first essential work at the source of the virus. Therefore there was nothing put in place to isolate the first victims and try to contain the spread of the virus. In short, an inability to anticipate costs many lives.

Comparison with Ebola

Bill Gates then compared the characteristics of this epidemic with others that he believes may have characteristics that are much more difficult to manage. Consequences would be much more dramatic. Ebola was not airborne, it affected patients who lived in rural areas, and the patients were in such bad shape that they were immediately bedridden once infected.

But then he imagined another case of an epidemic that would have the following characteristics: patients in urban areas, who would sometimes have no symptoms, and who would feel well enough to take a train or a plane and change countries, but who would be extremely contagious without knowing it. You get the picture: a virus exactly like the COVID-19, the one currently sweeping the planet.

There are solutions

This doesn't make Bill Gates a pessimist. He explained that we now have all the technology and scientific expertise to effectively protect ourselves from such a threat. According to him, we do have all the tools, but they must be

managed by a global health system that should be managed in a NATO-style way. An army with troops ready to intervene, reservists to reinforce these troops if necessary, training exercises carried out regularly to prepare for interventions, and significant resources invested. 'This is the kind of thing we need for an epidemic.' With scientists and doctors, not soldiers, of course.

Bill Gates saw Ebola as a warning, but more importantly, as a chance to prepare for a much bigger potential epidemic. And he was already anticipating that if we didn't prepare, we would suffer millions of deaths and billions in economic losses. We should have listened to him.

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Check your vocab!

I. Match the words and phrases (1-5) with their definitions (A-E).

1. **to anticipate** (verb)
2. **contagious** (adjective)
3. **threat** (noun)
4. **urban** (adjective)
5. **to reinforce** (verb)

A. relating to towns and cities
B. to imagine or expect that something will happen
C. the possibility that something dangerous will happen
D. to provide an army with more soldiers or weapons to make it stronger
E. (of a disease) spread from one person or organism to another, typically by direct contact

II. Complete the sentences with one of the words below.

1. The infection is _____, so don't drink from my bottle.
   A. contagious   B. urban

2. Drunk drivers are a serious _____ to other road users.
   A. threat   B. urban

3. None of us was able to _____ what actually happened.
   A. reinforce   B. anticipate

4. Another two battalions of soldiers will _____ the troops.
   A. anticipate   B. reinforce

5. More than 67% of the country's population live in _____ areas.
   A. anticipate   B. urban