

## The 2019-nCoronavirus Epidemic: Our Biases won't Protect Us

Although the virus was first identified in China, that does not mean that people from this country living in France present a transmission risk; our fellow Chinese citizens, and Asians in general, are not more likely to be carriers of the virus than other Ile-de-France inhabitants.

For travelers coming from areas where the epidemic is widespread, precautionary measures have been taken at airport arrival terminals. It was also precautionary reasons that led health authorities to quarantine French returnees from China.

The transmission risk only exists in case of close contact with a person infected with the virus, no matter where the person is from. As with any contagious virus, basic hygiene represents the first step in protection. Measures such as washing hands, coughing into one's elbow, using single-use tissues, wearing a mask and staying home when ill are as much to protect one's self from illness, as they are to avoid spreading it to others. Consequently, the act of wearing a mask in public spaces is first and foremost a warning sign for others: this protects other people from all viruses that someone could carry, and specifically, the flu virus, currently very active. This does not mean that someone has the Coronavirus, or that they are sick: this simply shows that they are being mindful of others.

In certain Asian countries, and specifically in China, wearing a mask in public spaces, quite common, is considered a fundamental sanitary measure. Therefore, it is completely normal that this defensive measure, recommended annually by the French Health Department's prevention campaigns during winter epidemics, were spontaneously adopted by many people – and this defensive measure should never be stigmatized.

Since this epidemic, like all other ones, affects everyone, it requires each person's effort to implement better daily hygiene.

No epidemic has ever been slowed down by the distrust or suspicion of others. On the contrary, distrust, suspicion and stigmatization create conditions that exacerbate the spreading of diseases.

