

World War II Jewish Warsaw ghetto in provides blueprint for how US might contain coronavirus

A paper published on [July 24] in Science Advances reports on [a sophisticated mathematical analysis](#) that shows how personal hygiene, quarantines, social distancing and a grass-roots public education campaign appeared to extinguish a raging typhus epidemic in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1941. The incident stands out because these well-recognized health-preserving measures were promulgated successfully, even as the Nazis attempted to use starvation and typhus to wipe out 450,000 people packed into an area the size of New York City's Central Park—five to 10 times the density of any city in today's world.

The researchers say some of the lessons from typhus in the Warsaw Ghetto may carry over to COVID-19. “At a basic level, we learn how communities can use simple public health measures designed to beat infectious diseases,” says Lewi Stone, the study's lead author. “Education, hygiene, motivation and cooperation are incredibly important in trying to beat the pandemic.”

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“The story of a community in these conditions,” [mathematical epidemiologist and professor Nina] Fefferman says, “under threat from both man and disease, still coming together to make and adhere to policies to help better their chances of all surviving together is exactly the sort of understanding and hope we need as we continue to shape our local, regional, national, and global response to COVID-19.”

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