

ASC Future Practices Committee

Report on Contact Tracing - September 2020 version 01

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Overview

Contact tracing is a method used by health authorities to control the spread of infectious diseases. The basic concept is that by keeping track of everyone an infected individual comes into contact with, it is possible to warn people that they have been in touch with someone that tested positive for a communicable disease (like Covid-19 Coronavirus) in the recent past. A request to quarantine or take some other measure is then possible, once a group of high-risk individuals have been identified. This system is effective if the majority of individuals involved are tracking their interactions.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, various versions of contract tracing programs and systems have been used with varying degrees of effectiveness. We will highlight some types and examples below. Our examples come from states, countries, organizations and other places where a contact tracing system is employed.

Good Explainer video from the Wall Street Journal to help understand the way these systems work.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8lQmu8gaRE>

Versions of Contact Tracing – automated, non-automated and hybrid.

Automated Contact Tracing: usually implemented through cell phone technology using APPS that track individual users and who they are in contact with. If someone you recently came into contact with reports testing positive for Covid-19, the APP on your phone can warn you to take precautions by quarantining yourself for 10 days. These apps rely on location services through Blu Tooth and Wi-Fi signals and generally track individual users that are near you for five minutes or more. Since phones can generate unique digital identifications, no personal information is necessary for the APPS to work correctly.

For example, if you note in the phone APP that you have tested positive for Covid-19, it will anonymously inform everyone else using the APP that was in contact with you for 5 minutes or more, within the recent past. An APP user at the other end will *not* be informed of your personal information, just warned that they were near someone who tested positive long enough to trigger an alarm, requesting them to quarantine voluntarily.

Another addition to this APP concept is using posted QR codes at all publicly accessible locations like shops, stores, schools, buildings, offices, etc. to track entry and exit. This way, if Blu Tooth and WiFi fail, there is a complete accounting of who entered a location, when they entered and when they exited.

Implementations of Automated Contact Tracing:

New Zealand

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-resources-and-tools/nz-covid-tracer-app/questions-and-answers-nz-covid-tracer>

State of Virginia

<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/covidwise/>

Wuhan China Track & Trace:

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/see-china-s-covid-19-contact-tracing-system-in-action-1.4943352>

Apple and Google partnership for contact tracing – Exposure Notifications

<https://www.google.com/covid19/exposurenotifications/>

Issues with the APP concept:

<https://www.wired.com/story/opinion-the-logic-around-contact-tracing-apps-is-all-wrong/>

Weaknesses:

<https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/healthcare-information-technology/why-contact-tracing-apps-fail-it-experts-share-5-reasons.html>

Non-automated Contact Tracing: This is primarily done by interviewers making phone calls. They first make a call to individuals who test positive for Covid-19. Once the interviewer compiles a list of people the infected individual was in contact with, they call everyone else and ask them to quarantine.

Multiple US States are currently using this method to help curb the spread. The more interviewers that are at the call centers, working through as many positive Covid-19 cases, the better.

Implementations of Non-Automated Contact Tracing

LA county contact tracing by phone:

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/coronavirus/data/contact-tracing.htm>

5 things to know about Contact Tracing calls from FTC:

https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/attachments/coronavirus-advice-consumers/contact_tracing_scams_infographic-1-508.pdf

New Jersey Q&A about Contact Tracing calls:

<https://covid19.nj.gov/faqs/nj-information/slowing-the-spread/how-do-i-know-when-a-contact-tracer-is-calling-how-do-i-know-its-not-a-scam-what-will-they-ask-me>

To work, a robust Contact Tracing system requires a hybrid approach:

Get as many people as possible in a population on the same APP and follow up with phone-based tracing and warnings to make sure people are separating themselves from the population

Keys for success:

- Widespread testing for Covid-19
- Preventative measures like social distancing and wearing of masks must be mandatory
- Phone based APPs have to be widely adopted
- Addition of QR codes to track people at locations must be added to the APP functionality
- Large scale call centers for non-automated tracing to complement APPs

How can Contact Tracing be applied to the film industry:

- Everyone in the industry, regardless of position or geography, uses one hybrid contact tracing system
- On set – this means all cast, crew, clients, producers or visitors are on the APP.
- At the Office (preproduction, production, post) – everyone is using the APP and tracking movement within office spaces with QR codes
- All production personnel turn over their contact information to a medical organization that runs a contact tracing phone bank follow-up service
- An agreement is reached on how to handle a positive notification – what steps have to be taken

Resources

CDC Contact Tracing Resources for Health Departments: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/open-america/contact-tracing-resources.html>