

# What national pastime's COVID-19 troubles should teach America

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**Kevin B. O'Reilly**

News Editor

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**What's the news:** Major league baseball's troubled experience with its delayed post-pandemic start reinforces some important lessons that policymakers, businesses and the American public should take to heart when it comes to safely reopening while limiting the spread of COVID-19.

That's the take-home message in an op-ed by AMA President Susan R. Bailey, MD, that was recently published in *USA Today*.

More than half of the Miami Marlins players recently tested positive for COVID-19, putting their season on hold. Meanwhile, 13 members of the St. Louis Cardinals club tested positive. That included seven players on the Cardinals roster. The St. Louis club's three-game set against the Chicago Cubs over the weekend also was postponed after three more Cardinals turned up positive.

"While we can't say for certain what led to such a sudden outbreak on either team, it seems plausible that the virus spread quickly through the close quarters of the locker room, clubhouse, team bus or chartered flight," Dr. Bailey wrote.

"What's true about COVID-19 in baseball is what's true about COVID-19 in the world outside—it does not respect borders or boundaries or differences of team uniforms or political affiliation," she added.

"And we know one more thing: Physical distancing works. Wearing a mask works. And limiting exposure to people outside your bubble helps slow the spread of the virus."

Learn more with the AMA about why it's vital to #MaskUp to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Baseball's big-league reopening troubles also show the problem with testing lags.

"Multibillion-dollar sports leagues have access to some of the best testing capabilities in this country," Dr. Bailey's op-ed says. "But, because COVID is spread even when people are asymptomatic and

because test results can take days, in the case of the Marlins, players and personnel remained in contact with the rest of the team, unknowingly spreading the virus while they awaited testing results.”

**Why it’s important:** “Baseball’s cautionary tale should drive home the point that it is folly to resume our pre-pandemic lifestyles in the face of a viral outbreak that is anything but under control,” Dr. Bailey wrote. “We don’t know how half of the Marlins’ players contracted the virus so early in the new season—but we do know that failing to take the steps shown to slow the spread of the virus puts more people at risk of infection.”

Americans “ignore this contagion at our own peril, and resuming our pre-pandemic lifestyle without concern for COVID-19 transmission will continue to yield more infections, more hospitalizations and more deaths,” the AMA’s president added.

“The return of baseball was supposed to be part of a return to normalcy—the benefit of hard work to flatten the curve. Instead, as cases continue to spike across the country and problems from March and the earliest days of the virus remain unaddressed, no one—not even baseball—is immune from the big challenges.”

**Learn more:** You can stay up to speed on the AMA’s COVID-19 advocacy efforts and track the fast-moving pandemic with the AMA’s COVID-19 resource center, which offers a library of the most up-to-date resources from JAMA Network™, the CDC, and the World Health Organization.