Masks vs. Condoms

April 30, 2009 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

Swine flu hysteria has infected the media, even though it remains to be seen if swine flu itself infects the public at large. Everywhere I turn there's an exaggerated headline or a screaming talking head telling me I should be scared. HIV scares me. Swine flu, not so much.

The evidence so far has been less than compelling to me that the current swine flu crisis deserves the hype. Swine flu has a long way to go before it kills the thousands of people every year that die from the common flu or HIV/AIDS.

In saying this, I am by no means downplaying the potential for swine flu to become our worst nightmare. But if all I had to go by was media coverage, I could be led to believe that swine flu indeed already is our worst nightmare. At this time, that's thankfully not true.

Well, it's not yet true here in the United States. However, in Mexico it's pretty darned close. At the very least, it's just a run-of-the-mill nightmare for them, especially in Mexico City. The sight of people as far as you can see wearing surgical masks is unsettling.

On Twitter and elsewhere, I've seen tweets that have been retweeted over and over again comparing swine flu and HIV. There are variations, but generally they say something like: "Some people get swine flu and everyone is buying masks. Millions get HIV and people still aren't wearing condoms." There is definitely truth in that sentiment.

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