

Special COVID Bulletin No 2 May 15th. 2020

One of the inspiring community organisations in the North East

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Reflections from the Editor:

In the last issue I wrote about the drug hydroxychloroquine, a large amount being imported to Australia by Clive Palmer. Last week I attended a meeting (virtual) of the Royal Australian Institute of Chemistry past presidents and other committee members. Two of the attendees are well versed in the pharmaceutical industry and hence we discussed the timeline for the introduction of a general vaccine for COVID 19 and we also discussed the use of hydroxychloroquine. The latter is not readily available from a regular Dr's prescription unless it has been in long time use by the patient. The use of the drug is under review by the Therapeutic Goods Administration and in the USA the FDA is also assessing its use. There is no doubt that insufficient knowledge is available about the drug to comment on its use for COVID 19, hence the advice remains **do not take this drug unless your medical practitioner has advised and enabled you to do so.**

Another topic for our discussion was the production of sufficient quantities of vaccine should a successful one be developed. In Saturday's Online newspaper "The New Daily" there was an article which was headlined **"Coronavirus vaccine trial: Oxford scientists shoot for one million doses by September"**!

As far as I am aware the only company that makes vaccines in Australia is CSL which is headquartered in Parkville, Melbourne. This was a Government company and it was privatised in 1994. Most of our vaccines come from China and India. I have seen some Chinese laboratories where vaccines are produced and they are very high standard places. I have recently read three scientific papers from the UK where the focus is on the development of a Vaccines manufacturing and innovation Centre. In the UK in the early 1970s major pharmaceutical companies in the UK could only make modest returns for their investment in vaccine production and hence investment decreased. On several occasions since then there have been UK Government incentives to promote collaboration between companies for vaccine production. This led to a major investment in developing a Vaccines manufacturing and Innovation Centre (VMIC). This project was claimed to be successful and yet it ceased in the early 2000s.

In 2015 a major project commenced in the UK with important inputs from Oxford University and Imperial College London. In 2016/17 it was decided that VMIC will work with the UK Government to develop and scale up manufacturing processes to produce a vaccine for use during an outbreak identified as a public health emergency of international concern. To the best of my knowledge much design work has been undertaken and now that we have a COVID 19 emergency, plans are underway for the construction phase. It is claimed that it may be possible to complete the project by 2022.

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I mention all of this because there are many headlines which claim that a vaccine for COVID 19 will be available before the end of the year. This is not possible unless the Chinese are almost at manufacturing stage which I doubt. Indeed, we may never get a vaccine if there are multiple strains of this corona virus.

This, means that life after COVID 19 will need to be very different than that of 2019. Hygiene, cleanliness & social distancing will be vital as they are now and even if there are low levels of the infection in the community, we have seen how easy it is for this virus to spread. We will have to be ultra-careful with our U3A activities given our age profile.

Another Reflection

A few weeks ago, I sent out a notice to all members about the Melbourne Digital Concerts.

<http://melbournedigitalconcerthall.com/> These are a series of online concerts that are performed by small groups of musicians from the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, The Melbourne Chamber Orchestra and Orchestra Victoria. I have spent many hours watching the various concerts in the evening although hooking up a computer to my “old fashioned” TV has presented challenges.

As some of you may know I wear hearing aids and have done so for quite a long time. For the concerts I have experimented with a Phonak Bluetooth device which hangs around my neck and receives its signal directly from a unit plugged into the TV. This device then uses Bluetooth to send the signal directly into my hearing aids giving me effectively “all round” sound. For music concerts the arrangement is ideal and I recommend those of you who wear similar hearing aids (quite a lot from my observations) to try this procedure. Here are my hearing aids and the Bluetooth arrangement:



The battery operated tooth brush is valuable for cleaning the hearing aids which is a daily exercise. I also have rechargeable batteries in the hearing aids. Listening to fine music, or heavy metal, is considerably enhanced using this technique and another advantage is that nobody else in the room knows that you are listening to music. Earlier this week I had the pleasure of watching and listening to Mozart's Clarinet & Strings concert with my newly found toy:



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Further Thoughts (sorry but it is more about COVID 19)

- Last week there was another panel discussion at the University of Melbourne. These panel discussions with the experts are called “Life beyond the Corona Virus” and I included the first of this series in the April Bulletin. The second, from last week, can be found at <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/watch-episode-2-life-beyond-coronavirus-the-expert-view?> (you need to cut and paste this into your web browser to open it) I found that the panel members provide very valuable insights and they are well summed up by the Dean of Medicine.
- The first coronavirus was discovered in 1965! – I suspect that most of you thought that such a virus is a very recent phenomenon. In fact, the discovery was made by the daughter of a Scottish bus driver, who left school at the age of 16! June Almeida grew up in a tenement on the outskirts of Glasgow and when she left school, she got a job as a laboratory technician at the Glasgow Royal Infirmary. She moved to London, married a Venezuelan artist and moved to Canada where she acquired skills with an electron microscope. She was lured back to London to work at St Thomas’s Hospital Medical School where work was progressing on a number of viruses. June Almeida used her skills with the Electron Microscope to examine virus particles which were similar to influenza viruses, but not the same. She had identified what has become known as the first human coronavirus and she named it because of the crown or halo surrounding it in the viral image. This was published in The British Medical Journal in 1965. June Almeida took some time out to study yoga and then returned to the laboratory to work on the HIV virus. She passed away in 2007.
- President Trump and his team have claimed that there is strong evidence that the SARS Coronavirus which causes COVID 19 originated in China and was leaked from a Wuhan Chinese Government Laboratory. An article was published in Nature Medicine in 2015 and the abstract heading was “A SARS-like cluster of circulating bat coronaviruses shows potential for human emergence”. The scientific journal “Nature” is probably the World’s top peer reviewed scientific publication with the World’s top scientists and engineers queuing to get articles published. There were 9 authors listed for the article of whom 2 were from the Wuhan Institute of Virology which is part of the Chinese Academy of Science. The other authors were Americans from very prestigious universities in the USA and one from a leading laboratory in Zurich, Switzerland. The Chinese Academy of Science is probably the top academy in the World in terms of scientific reputation and integrity. I have had the great good fortune when I was working to collaborate with one of the Academy Vice Presidents. Given that the work on the SARS cluster was shared with each of several of the World’s top academies it is highly unlikely that any virus could have leaked, deliberately or otherwise, from one of the laboratories. Remember there were more scientists from the USA working on the project than Chinese scientists. What is very disturbing is that the key conclusion from the work was “Our work suggests a potential risk of SARS-CoV re-emergence from viruses currently circulating in bat populations.” A similar conclusion had been drawn from scientific work published by others in 2007. The present corona virus which has killed 300,000 people worldwide (98 in Australia) should have been anticipated in 2015 and yet the World was totally unprepared for this pandemic. The World’s scientific leaders have let us down by not heeding the warnings, although I have been told by friends that the politicians ignored the scientists. The emergence of this deadly virus should have been foreseen by the World’s chief scientists and their political masters!
- My final rumbling for now is to praise our Government leaders, (Federal & State) and to hope that the approach that they have shown since the beginning of the COVID 19 scare will continue

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for the long term. I mean by this that they have listened to the scientists which of course embraces scientists, medical experts, engineers and other experts. Back in March in the UK this was not the case and the attached article is very revealing. It is by Helen Ward who is a professor of public health at Imperial College London. Imperial College is a top rating University College and its work in the medical area is second to none. I wonder if the present disastrous situation in the UK could have been avoided if the Prime Minister had listened to the scientists. Double click on the symbol to open the article. If this doesn't work please let me know and I will send it separately.



We scientists said
lock down.docx

Something Lighter!!!! (you can click on these to open them)

- Do you know what Tom Foolery means? Try this:



Tomfoolery 2020
MALY3012.MP4

- You may also enjoy these:



LGWI2847.MP4



FAWK4703.MP4

- Perhaps these are more straightforward:

still confused as to why I need to put my
cake in the oven at 120 degrees



Fitness instructor:
Have you ever done
a marathon?
Me:
You mean like on Netflix?

David Wood (Bulletin Editor) 15th May 2020.....**How about some letters or stories to/for the editor?**