

How the O'ConnorvirUS calmed, first, America - then, the World

Biochemical researchers have recently reported a likely molecular pathway that led to the development of the O'ConnorvirUS. Preliminary results indicate that the American bald eagle initially transmitted variants of infectious plasmids to a confined population of Iowa pigs. Replication of these plasmids within these pork bellies, followed by their subsequent consumption, then led to the spread of the O'ConnorvirUS throughout rural midwestern farm communities.

The presence of this novel viral agent went unnoticed for an undetermined period. Only when agricultural economists noted that regional farm productivity had inexplicably declined did epidemiologists start to look for - and discover - a possible contributing factor. The O'ConnorvirUS, as well as numerous antibodies which had responded to its presence, were found in the bodily fluids of virtually all lethargic agricultural workers tested. Whole sequencing of the new viral genome revealed that it was both highly infective and, likely, drug resistant.

However, drug resistance did not constitute a significant health concern. Adverse effects of infection with the O'ConnorvirUS were barely detectable by conventional medical tests and screenings. The carriers exhibited no fever, no coughs, no headaches or muscle pains, no shortness of breath or digestive distress. Those who were infected were, seemingly, healthy and asymptomatic. Moreover, they evidenced a particularly optimistic disposition.

Owing to its lack of pathogenicity and seemingly positive impact on mood, reports of the detection and spread of the O'ConnorvirUS were generally either greeted dispassionately or, by some, with a degree of patriotic fervor. At last, our nation now boasted a congenial, all-American virus, spawned by American bald eagles and delivered to patriots in the Heartland through American pork chops, loins and roasts. No aggressive medical countermeasures, such as quarantines, curfews, masks, respirators, disinfectant sprays, ..., were indicated. No urgent vaccine development, testing and production had to be mandated. Infections could be allowed to take their course until the onset of *'herd immunity'* erased virtually all memory that their spread had ever occurred.

Even so, there were still possible consequences that U.S. research biochemists were eager to explore. For example, *'What had this precocious O'ConnorvirUS spawned in terms of virus-fighting antibodies? - And what influence did these internally-generated immunoglobulins (Ig) have on their hosts?'*

The soon-to-be-verified answers to these ancillary questions created confusion among America's biochemists. In addition to the expected, common assortment of antibodies, analysts encountered an abundance of novel chemical fragments. Most of these moieties resembled, in chemical character, snippets of the tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) family.

These inexplicable findings went far to explain the results of the earliest patient screenings. Many of those examined had been found to be upbeat, relaxed, unconcerned, at ease, - even to a degree, spiritual. The psychoactive chemical components generated by their own autoimmune systems appeared to have conferred a calming effect on the O'ConnorvirUS victims.

Reports of these results excited many who viewed such agreeable immune responses as desirable. Some, not yet infected, thought it would be fun to enjoy the benefits of self-generated euphoria. Financially, this also appeared to be an economic windfall. The question: *"How could they get infected?"*

In support of the concept of viral propagation, at some less traditional marriage ceremonies, the embracing newlyweds licked each others noses. Since most found little reason to avoid close or intimate contact, the O'ConnorvirUS plus the agreeable contagion it conferred, spread.

Unfortunately, viral infections do not last forever. Follow-up studies of those initially infected with the O'ConnorvirUS revealed that the infection had subsided within months so that the body ceased its production of antibodies - along with their comforting psychoactive by-products. Therefore, recovery from the O'ConnorvirUS created a conundrum for those who had become accustomed to the mellowing and calming effects of actively resisting a congenial viral infection.

Proposals for creating and providing products made to induce - and reintroduce - O'ConnorvirUS infection was bitterly opposed by the nation's cannabis growers who

were just starting to reap substantial benefits from their long-suppressed marketing efforts. Federal agencies, likewise, were reluctant to endorse the marketing of products containing a live virus. Nevertheless, the illicit distribution of the O'ConnorvirUS via everyday products rapidly materialized. Reinfection at dinnertime was both simple and cheap. O'ConnorvirUS 'butter' was an inexpensive and stable (under refrigeration) favorite. Intimate contact was still cheaper.

By the time the O'ConnorvirUS had become the most prevalent viral infection across the U.S., nodes had started to appear at tourist destinations worldwide.

In addition, leaders of nations that suffered from violent tribal and religious rivalries, repeated terrorist attacks, and interminable internecine warfare began to imagine that, as broad-based infections with the O'ConnorvirUS occurred within their constituencies, internal conflicts and mayhem might moderate. *'Like a bridge over troubled waters, would O'ConnorvirUS calm things down?'*

And so, a global effort to exploit the pacifying virus began - in hopes that wars, traditional ethnic rivalries, pent-up anger, prejudice and hatred could be diminished by infecting entire populations with an exotic organism that conferred serenity and calmed aggressive behavior.

Increasingly, there was reason to believe such a strategy might work. In the U.S., political rivalries had diminished as American voters coalesced to decisively dispatch a lunatic president. Thereafter, there had been agreements within new political coalitions directed at restoring commitments to environmental protection; providing substantial defenses against the ravages of global warming; and funding the maintenance of vital national infrastructure.

Still, for the most part, the entrenched governments of the crisis-afflicted nations sought to maintain control over the distribution of the O'ConnorvirUS, a seemingly impossible prospect considering the speed and facility of infection. Even so, strong governments sought to obtain 'packaged' viral-infected products which they could distribute strategically. For example, the Israelis might direct their viral resource at the Arab and Palestinian populations, while the Saudis could deploy it throughout Yemen to suppress the insurrection. Turkey would clearly target both the Kurds in their midst

and those outside their borders while Russia would preferentially feed it to the besieged Ukrainians.

A few Asian countries employed imaginative approaches, including sending sex workers to study at American Universities so they might bring back home thriving reservoirs of the virus. Although this was also considered a promotional '*good will*' effort, it is not certain that orchestrating the mechanics of transmitting the O'ConnorvirUS was necessary. Even without stimulus, it would create the world's first '*super-pandemic*', penetrating even the world's remotest and insular outposts.

The effectiveness of the O'ConnorvirUS in reducing international tensions was yet to be borne out as the response of various ethnic populations outside the U.S. varied from modest to strong. The Indian, Chinese and a broad range of Southeast Asian populations reacted vigorously - and cheerfully - to the byproducts of the O'ConnorvirUS antibodies. Over years, it would be learned that their governments had orchestrated recurring infections. This resulted in reduced sexual appetite and markedly reduced population growth rates, an outcome that previous administrations had pursued for decades - with minimal success.

The Middle East populations offered a more modest success story. The calming of regional passions, it was believed, resulted in fewer wars and conflicts, culminating in greater compassion for their war-torn, displaced hordes. Modest political accommodations had even been made for water and food short regions. An apparent increase in respect, if not camaraderie, spawned universal greetings throughout a region consumed by hatred for thousands of years. For the Jews, *שהשלום יהיה עימך*; for the Arabs, *تصحيك السلامة*

Or, as we say in America, '*Peace on You!*'