What I'm Reading (Feb. 28)

By Chuck Dinerstein, MD, MBA — February 28, 2020

Facial recognition and both Carnival Cruises, and every journalists’ current favorite, the Coronavirus. ... Is eating local inherently more "green?" ... And the most important science of all: Why Cheerios clump together in milk.

You can’t go for more than a few hours without an update or new article on the Coronavirus.

“For decades, China has been building and refining the ability to track its citizens’ whereabouts and interactions to contain dissent and protest. The state’s effort to try to contain the rapid spread of the new Coronavirus is now testing the limits of that surveillance system.

... Authorities have sourced data from phone carriers and called on private tech companies to set up virtual health hotlines in order to trace everyone who’s been in or near Hubei province, home to Wuhan, the epicenter of the outbreak. They’ve also activated an extensive network of Communist Party members and community groups, encouraging citizens to monitor neighbors’ vital signs and whereabouts.”

The Coronavirus epidemic in China is teaching us many lessons beyond those of epidemiologic planning and fear. There is increasing media attention on the impacts of the disease and the global supply chain. Here is a look and perhaps a cautionary tale, at how the surveillance state acts in the face of a health crisis, and no it is not about saving face and limiting information. From
Bloomberg’s Businessweek, China’s Surveillance State Pushed to the Limits in Virus Fight [2].

Staying with the same theme, we have this.

“Facial recognition is garnering so much attention now, but the NECs and MorphoTrusts of the world aren’t often associated with this technology. We see a lot of advocacy and reporting focusing on Amazon and other household names, which has meant that large facial recognition companies have largely been able to actually fly under the radar.”

Let’s fly under the radar too and get a more in-depth look at a big player in facial recognition, coming soon if not already in your home neighborhoods. From Medium’s OneZero, “Carnival Cruises, Delta, and 70 Countries Use a Facial Recognition Company You’ve Never Heard Of” [3]

“Eat local.” It’s a recommendation you’ve probably heard before. Environmental advocates and even the United Nations have hyped a “locavore” diet as a way to reduce your carbon footprint and help the climate. … Eating locally would only have a significant impact if transport was responsible for a large share of food’s final carbon footprint. For most foods, this is not the case,”

From Vox, How to reduce your food’s carbon footprint, in 2 charts [4]

“You may be wondering at this point why the hell I’m talking about the physics behind breakfast cereal. A couple of reasons. The first is that I stumbled on a recent article about it. A team of Brown University researchers directly measured the forces at play in the phenomenon and published a paper on it in December. … I love this kind of stuff because it’s born out of an open mind, child-like curiosity, and a determination to find an answer. Not to get published in a prestigious journal, not to win an award, not to advance a career, not to earn a degree, not to be more well-known. Quite simply, as Richard Feynman put it, ‘It is the pleasure in finding the thing out.’”

Here is the article [5] and a 5-minute video explainer [6] courtesy of Peter Attia, MD

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