What I'm Reading (May 14)

By Chuck Dinerstein, MD, MBA — May 14, 2020

Two great articles on what we really know about COVID-19 and a graphic explanation of vaccines, how government regulations are working against us, and having spent the last two months indoors, perhaps we should become a bit more serious about our indoor air quality.

"Unlike close relatives, SARS-CoV-2 can readily attack human cells at multiple points, with the lungs and the throat being the main targets. Once inside the body, the virus makes use of a diverse arsenal of dangerous molecules. And genetic evidence suggests that it has been hiding out in nature, possibly for decades."

COVID-19 is one of life's creations. We should take a moment to appreciate and recognize how smart our "invisible enemy" really is. Two months into the pandemic, and now reliable information is beginning to flow. David Cyranoski, writing in Nature, provides a concise, readable review of what we know of the origins and behavior of COVID-19. Turn out both a lot and a little. From Nature, Profile of a killer: the complex biology powering the coronavirus pandemic
This article strikes the right balance, "sciency," but not statistics, charts, and tables.

The journal Nature is on fire with a second must-read article, perhaps graphic novel is a better description of The race for coronavirus vaccines: a graphical guide [3]

"One of the few everyday consumer items still not available at most stores is good old rubbing alcohol. Unlike the toilet paper shortage caused by irrational hoarding, the coronavirus pandemic has greatly increased the actual need for germ-sanitizing alcohol.

What makes the shortage particularly frustrating is that the U.S. is, by far, the world's largest producer of alcohol."

From the Wall Street Journal, a look at our government dysregulation, Why You Can't Find Rubbing Alcohol [4]

One of the points that I have learned about air pollution is that indoor air quality, the place we spend the most significant amount of time, often differs significantly from the outdoor air quality, that which is regulated by the EPA.

“The Airthinx uses nine built-in sensors to measure key air quality indicators. There are the obvious ones like temperature, humidity, and carbon dioxide; ones that don’t seem to matter like air pressure and organic compounds; and the ones you don’t think about like formaldehyde and particulate matter. Particulate matter is a catch-all term. It can be dust, smoke, soot, viruses, fungi, or bacteria, among other things. ... I opened the Airthinx app to see that my Indoor Air Quality score was 72 out of 100. Even though zero is the worst possible score and 100 indicates pristine conditions, 72 ranks as poor? Why?”

From Wired, The Quest for Clean Air [5]