



North Coast Physician

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Cover Photo

"WILLOW CREEK AND FOOTBRIDGE"

Stephen Kamelgarn, M.D.

The Editorial and Publications Committee encourages our member's comments for publication. Please submit electronically prior to the 15th of the month preceding publication. hdncms@sbcglobal.net

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The New Lysenkoism

Luther F. Cobb, M.D.



"History may not repeat itself, but it does rhyme": attributed to Mark Twain (if he didn't say it, he should have).

Chances are that unless you are very interested in the history of genetics, you may not have heard of the late Soviet Ukrainian agronomist, Trofim Denisovich Lysenko. Despite his relative obscurity, he is responsible (although with a lot of help, certainly) for one of the greatest human tragedies in history.

Briefly, Lysenko lucked into his situation due largely to the confluence of his status as one of the proletariat when that demographic was promoted as the source of the ultimate wisdom in Soviet life (as opposed to those stuffy old bourgeois men (and of course they were all men)) from the learned academies. As he came from illiteracy to the head of the Soviet agronomy, he had great faith in his intuition. He was concerned that harvests were inadequate to feed the masses of the Soviet Union, and with the unqualified and total support of Stalin, he became the arbiter of all that was true in Soviet agriculture.

Unfortunately, his ideas were at odds not only with the known facts of genetics and heredity as known everywhere else, and even when DNA was conclusively demonstrated to be the mechanism of heredity, he stubbornly clung to his "New Soviet Man" ideals, that grain, like humans, could be perfected with the truths of dialectical materialism. For him, that meant that he could "train" new qualities in grain that would then be transmitted genetically to subsequent generations of grain. This would allow his principal crop of interest, winter wheat, to increase in productivity and feed the masses with collectivization of the farms of Russia, Ukraine, and other central and eastern European SSR's and the client states

of Eastern Europe after World War 2.

Since this idea is rank nonsense, the predictable consequence was massive famine, referred to in his native Ukraine as the "holodomor". The most conservative estimate of the deaths this caused in Ukraine is at least four million lives as well as many births that didn't occur due to the suppression of normal birth rates. Other local SSR's suffered similarly. Since it was forbidden to criticize someone so wholly in Stalin's favor, anyone who dared question his methods was treated with loss of job appointment at best, exile to the gulag, or murder at worst. Tens of thousands of academicians and scholars were ousted or killed, and Soviet biology was a dead zone until basically the end of Krushchev's tenure in office as Chair of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR. Some estimates of deaths in the USSR overall exceed ten million, and of course accurate records are almost impossible to ascertain. After China fell to the Maoist revolution, Lyseonko's ideas were imported there, with the consequence of another fifteen million deaths from starvation during the Great Famine of the 1950's, at a minimum.

So, how is this relevant today? Why bother reviewing this ancient history? Well, my point is that when politics overrules science, bad things are most likely going to occur. If you have been following the news regarding the novel coronavirus, aka Covid-19, I think it is a well received truism that this country has handled the pandemic worse than anywhere else on the globe (or the flat surface surrounded by ice walls, if you are a Flat Earther...). With around 5% of the Earth's population, we have sustained around 20% of recorded deaths, a stunning statistic for a country that prides itself on its scientific

and biological primacy.

As I write this, we have just passed 200,000 confirmed fatalities due to the virus, and certainly there are many more unrecognized deaths. It was the USA that decoded the human genome, for heaven's sake. But now, there is political interference not only on how to avoid spreading the very contagious infection, the mere courtesy of wearing a mask to avoid transmission is viewed as an infringement on our basic constitutional rights.

Yet, we don't view not shouting fire in a crowded theater (were we to have them, alas) as such an infringement. We don't allow smoking on airplanes, or in other closely crowded spaces. We don't bristle at the notion that we must drive on the right side of the highway, when there may be perfectly empty lanes on the other side, just waiting for us to occupy so we can get where we are going faster. So what if these acts are dangerous to ourselves and our fellow citizens?

Why are masks viewed differently? I admit they aren't fun, but I have personally spent many years in masks in the course of my work, and never thought it a big deal. Nor did anyone else I knew in the Operating Room or in isolation rooms on the wards.

And it wouldn't be a big deal, nor would the admonitions regarding social distancing, the return to classroom education, etc. The recommended measures that are useful are well known tenets of good social hygiene. But because they are inconvenient, they become anathema, and the administration tries to bury the truth in order to cover up its incompetence and malfeasance. Having someone like Scott Atlas, who has a medical degree (in diagnostic radiology) dispute the expertise of Anthony Fauci, who has dedicated his life to public service in pursuit of public health, is not only

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absurd, it is criminal. And Senator Rand Paul who also has a medical degree but was unable to pass his board exams in Ophthalmology until he had to create his own "Board", with himself as the sole diplomate, has the temerity and sheer gall to hector Dr Fauci. That is absurd, and outrageous. It is hard to imagine two medical fields less related to the difficult problems of infection, pulmonology, intensive care, etc, than Ophthalmology and Neuroradiology. And yet that is the best they can come up with.

This state of affairs ought to trouble any of us who care about science and public health. The relevance to my little biographic note about Lysenko is that the same thing is happening right here, and right now. Science, and scientists, are being supplanted, harassed, and defamed just for trying to turn back the tide of this pandemic. Hundreds of thousands of Americans are dying needlessly. So far, scientists and dissenters are not being jailed, but such ideas are being shouted out by some. And threats of violence are becoming commonplace.

This is wrong. This needs to stop. We need to say so ourselves, and do whatever we can to make this stop. It can certainly involve voting for scientifically rational candidates. We also need to speak out to those in the

general public who don't understand, or don't care to understand, how dangerous this is, and how it can be better. It means we need to speak out publicly, and inform our patients as to best practices to safeguard themselves and their communities. So far, here behind the Redwood Curtain, we have been fairly lucky, but this is not over yet, and it won't be for a long while. We must keep up standards or we too will have a much bigger problem on our hands.

In light of the political interference in science relating to the Covid pandemic, it has come to light that an actual Trump campaign staffer has been assigned to review and revise the output of the CDC's extremely well-regarded Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (AKA the MMWR). There is a recent editorial in JAMA addressing this concern, which is apparently true. That should alarm anyone interested in competent public health administration. Because reports regarding the pandemic are potentially embarrassing to the current administration, interference is being exerted to sugar-coat or alter the reports, with obvious negative consequences. I have some personal familiarity with this, inasmuch as I was a victim of an epidemic that was sleuthed out by their medical detectives. In 1990, I went back

to Nashville for the 20th class reunion of my high school. (Yes, I am that old; our 50th would have been held this year, but for the pandemic). The classy facility where the reunion was held had, for an unknown length of time, been pumping water from a well that was not checked for pathogens, as they wanted to avoid paying for "that expensive city water". It turned out that the water was contaminated with Shigella. I, and some 200 of my classmates, got pretty sick, but fortunately no one died. It was the lead article in the MMWR, as the CDC found the source, identified the persons who ordered the water substitution, and those folks went to jail. (I got a \$25 refund for the cost of my meal..) I hate to think that if those folks were politically connected that they could have covered up this small epidemic. But that is likely to happen, and apparently is already happening, once political bias is allowed to intrude on what are strictly epidemiological and medical findings and recommendations.

Facts may be inconvenient for some, but they remain as facts, spin doctors to the contrary notwithstanding. We need to understand, support, and broadcast the science of this infection, and its management, as much as possible. If we don't, who will?

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“H.O.D.”, Continued From Pg. 17

pandemic response focus on procurement of medical equipment and supplies, strengthening the infectious disease data surveillance system, addressing health disparities, addressing impacts from climate change, supporting the health and social safety net to facilitate infection control policies, ensuring a robust healthcare workforce; and mitigating the pandemic's impact on the erosion of social cohesion in communities.

RECOMMENDATION 2: That CMA, after state and federal governments have declared the end of the state of emergency related to the COVID-19 pandemic, should continue to advocate for and participate in the development of After Action Reports (AAR) and a new pandemic preparedness plan that is regularly updated and informed by the experiences of stakeholders and lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic.

RECOMMENDATION 3: CMA shall support that future pandemic planning shall be conducted through a public and transparent process and informed by the experiences of stakeholders and lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, and that the scope of the plan shall include, but not be limited to, procurement of medical equipment and supplies; strengthening the infectious disease data surveillance system; addressing impacts of the plan on and by health disparities and climate change; supporting the health and social safety net to facilitate infection control policies and safeguard communities and social development; supporting transparent communication between government entities and physicians about vaccine development; and ensuring a robust healthcare workforce.

RECOMMENDATION 4: CMA support improving access to federal resources in the current and future pandemics by document-

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North Coast Physician



The Humboldt IPA is excited to announce a new project that will be focused on finding all of the many good things that are happening in Humboldt County and feature them in a new podcast. One of our wellness coaches, Juliet Ferri, will host Humboldt Healthcast and will talk to individuals about local programs and projects. Each episode will feature information that can help everyone live a better life with valuable tips and information about what things all of us can do in our corner of the world.

Episode one is an introduction into why the Humboldt IPA is taking on this project. Juliet interviews the Humboldt IPA CEO Rosemary Den Ouden who discusses why this is an important new endeavor. Episode 1, titled ‘No we don’t make beer’ is a discussion about what the Humboldt IPA is, and why we are excited about this new project. We hope that the podcast will be a positive light for many now and into the future.

Some of the other episodes include topics such as:

- Ideas to take care of our most precious asset, our mental health.
- June was Men’s Health Month.



This episode discusses the different aspects of health and well-being for men.

- Learn about local trails and what biking can offer you.
- Host Juliet Ferri interviews Coach Sonny Tripp about the Boys to Men: Beyond

Bullies group at McKinleyville Middle School.

- An interview with local school superintendent, Heidi Moore-Guynup for insight and further information.
- Hear more about the Humboldt RISE project which is focused on addressing perinatal substance use disorder in Humboldt County. RISE stands for Resiliency and Inclusion through Support and Empowerment.
- What is stress and why it is important to manage it, and different ways to cope.

The Humboldt Healthcast new episodes are produced twice a month and are available to listen on our website at podcast.humboldtipa.com as well as the following podcast platforms: Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, and Spotify. §

2021 NOMINATING COMMITTEE

*John Mastroni, M.D. * Kate McCaffrey, D.O.
Kelvin Vu, D.O. * George Zibilich, M.D.*

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Call 707-441-5000 for COVID-19 information

KEEP YOUR FAMILY SAFE DURING COVID-19

The Latino population has an increased risk of contracting the virus. Do your part to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to your family and community:

- Wash hands frequently or use alcohol-based (70% +) sanitizer.
- Wear facial covering when you are near other people, and avoid touching your face or the outside of your mask.
- Socially distance (6 feet apart), both indoors and outdoors.
- Clean surfaces regularly with a cleaner approved for COVID-19.
- Check yourself and your family for symptoms:
- Stay home from work if you are sick.
- Keep children home from school if they are sick.
- Schedule a free COVID-19 test. Visit humboldt.gov to learn more.
- Consider not smoking cannabis or tobacco. If you do smoke, do not share smoking devices with others.
- When indoors, open windows to improve air flow.

COVID-19 SYMPTOMS

- cough
- shortness of breath
- fever
- headache
- diarrhea
- chills
- increased confusion
- nasal congestion or runny nose
- muscle pain
- dizziness
- new onset loss of taste or smell.

AVOID GATHERINGS

Currently, gatherings are not permitted and are discouraged. Avoid close contact with others, even if they are family. If a gathering does occur, consider the following recommendations:

- Gatherings should be 10 people or fewer.
- Gathering outside is safer than inside.
- Social distance (6 feet apart).
- Everyone should wear a facial covering.
- Wash hands frequently and clean and disinfect tables, chairs and other surfaces.

REMEMBER:

Not all people with COVID-19 exhibit symptoms. It is important to wear facial coverings and maintain social distancing.

QUESTIONS WELCOME

We want to ensure the safety of all Humboldt County residents during COVID-19 and stop the spread in our community. For guidance, call 707-441-5000.



adapted from a CDPH publication.

Humboldt County Joint Information Center