

Good news for print buyers and users...

Zero Incidents of Covid-19 Transmission from Print

Earl J. Wilkinson, our guest columnist, researches an important topic for readers in this month's Overnight Lite.

There has never been a documented incident whereby the COVID-19 virus has been transmitted from a print newspaper, print magazine, print letter, or print package, according to the world's top doctors and scientists.

In recent days, the International News Media Association (INMA) has received a few inquiries about this scientific possibility—to which we cited World Health Organization (WHO) guidance on the matter.

Yet the unprecedented global pandemic naturally breeds a paranoia about everything we touch, so let me present to you what INMA knows on this subject.

What Research Shows

Here is what the WHO says about whether it's safe to receive a package from an area where COVID-19 has been reported: "The likelihood of an infected person contaminating commercial goods is low and the risk of catching the virus that causes COVID-19 from a package that has been moved, travelled, and exposed to different conditions and temperatures is also low."

Hartford Healthcare put it more bluntly: "Don't worry about deliveries to your house. Coronaviruses don't last long on objects."

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) says "it may be possible" for a person to get COVID-19 by touching a surface that has the virus on it, "but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads."

No Confirmation

The WHO and CDC statements sound like a hedging of the unknown — fair enough in these times. Yet the fact remains there have been no incidents of transmission on print materials.

National Health Study

A study from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Centers for Disease Control (CDC), UCLA, and Princeton University scientists published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* showed the varying stability of the coronavirus on different surfaces.

Across various surfaces, the lowest levels of transmission possibilities were via copper because of its atomic make-up and cardboard—presumably because of its porous nature.

Porous Paper Best

The coronavirus lasts longest on smooth, non-porous surfaces.

Researchers found the virus was still viable after three days on plastic and stainless steel. Researchers say that is not as ominous as it sounds since the virus' strength declines rapidly when exposed to air. Because the virus loses half its potency every 66 minutes, it is only one-eighth as infectious after three hours when it first landed on a surface.

Six hours later, viability is only 2% of the original, researchers found.

The virus was not viable after 24 hours on cardboard—and the good news here, like plastic and stainless steel, is lower and lower potency when exposed to air.

For newsprint, which is much more porous than cardboard, virus viability is presumably even shorter.

Experts Agree

In a *Washington Post* article, author Joel Achenbach put a study in human terms:

"Outside, on an inanimate surface, the virus will gradually lose the ability to be an infectious agent. It may dry out, for example.

It can degrade when exposed to ultraviolet radiation from the sun. A person sneezing on a surface may deposit many

thousands of virus particles, and some may remain viable for days. Still, the likelihood of a person who comes into contact with the remnants of that sneeze goes down over time, because most infections are the result of a large viral load."

Natural Defenses

Cornell University infectious disease expert Gary Whittaker told *The Post* it typically takes "an army of viruses going in" to break through the natural defenses of a human being — meaning surface transmission is a low likelihood of transmission."

In an interview on BBC Radio Scotland, John Innes Centre virologist George Lomonosoff, who uses molecular biology to understand the assembly and properties of viruses in the United Kingdom, debunked the idea of transmission through newsprint.

Another Sterile Test

"Newspapers are pretty sterile because of the way they are printed and the process they've been through.

Traditionally, people have eaten fish and chips out of them for that very reason. So all of the ink and the print makes them actually quite sterile. The chances of that are infinitesimal.

In conclusion, all scientific evidence suggests porous paper is safe.

Our Sincere Thanks

Our thanks to Earl J. Wilkinson for his definitive article. Earl is the executive director of International News Media Association in Dallas, Texas. He blogs at The Earl Blog at www.inma.org.

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Address Correction Requested



Torrential rainstorms were knocking down power lines all over town. That meant, as a customer service rep for the electric company, I was dispatching repairmen right and left. When one lineman called a customer to get her exact address, he was told, "I'm at post office box 99." The weary lineman replied, "Ma'am, I'll be coming to you in a truck, not an envelope."



"My brother got arrested at the zoo this afternoon." "Arrested? What was he doing?" "Feeding the pigeons." "But—



what's wrong with that?" "He was feeding them to the lions."



I couldn't stand my boy's long hair any more, so I dragged him to the barber and ordered, "Give him a crew cut." The barber did just that, and so help me, I found I'd been bringing up someone else's son!

My grandmother, who is very near-sighted, lost her glasses. Now she's trying to knit a sweater out of spaghetti.



Mother had just finished waxing the floors when she heard her young son open the front door. "Be careful on that



floor, Jimmy," she shouted. "It's just been waxed." Jimmy, walking right in, replied, "Don't worry, Mom, I'm wearing my cleats."



Newlywed couples shouldn't expect the first few meals to be perfect. After all, it takes time to find the right restaurant.



The skydiving instructor was taking questions from his new students when one of them asked, "If our chute doesn't open, and the reserve doesn't open, how long until we hit the ground?" The jumpmaster shrugged, "The rest of your life."

Mr. Briggs was making a knotty pine bookcase. His young son pointed to it and asked, "What are those holes for?" They're knot holes," replied his father. "Well," said the lad, "if they're not holes, what are they?"



Sign over a bench: Wet paint—watch it or wear it.




Kids will never understand why parents make them go to bed when they're wide-awake and get up when they're sleepy!



A very thin man met a very fat man in the hotel lobby. "From the looks of you," said the fat man, "there might have been a famine." "Yes," was the reply, "and from the looks of you, you might have caused it."





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