

Make Me Smart August 4, 2021 transcript

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Kai Ryssdal: Whoa!

Kimberly Adams: There it is.

Kai Ryssdal: There it is. Hey everybody, I'm Kai Ryssdal, welcome back to Make Me Smart, making today make sense is what we try to do on this podcast, some days more successfully than others. I fear.

Kimberly Adams: Oh, hopefully today's gonna be a more successful one. I'm Kimberly Adams. It's what do you want to know Wednesday, the day in the week when we try to get to some of the answers and questions. We'll get to the questions that y'all send us and then hopefully try to answer them. And you can send your questions in, as always, to makemesmart@marketplace.org or leave us a voicemail at our number 508-827-6278, also known as 508-UB-SMART.

Kai Ryssdal: Excellent. Alright, so starting off today on what do you want to know Wednesday, Kurt in Idaho has this.

Kurt: I have a lot of friends that are reluctant to get their vaccine because they say it's still an experimental drug. Even though it has emergency use authorization, it doesn't have full FDA approval. So my question is, how far out is this approval and what is involved in the process? Thanks!

Kai Ryssdal: Yeah, great question about vaccine reluctance because it's not formally approved, right? It's still on that emergency use, rather, authorization. Piece in The New York Times, I think, like, today or yesterday, talking about the FDA thinking about approving--not thinking about--on track to approve the Pfizer vaccine by Labor Day, which seems really soon. Lots of pressure, of course, up to and including, you know, from high reaches in the government which, you know, fine, okay. But it's a much more convoluted and drawn-out process, right, to approve something for permanent use as opposed to emergency use authorization, which is what we have now. It's really different.

Kimberly Adams: Yeah, but I would also say that, you know, I think there's a difference between getting formal FDA approval and being experimental. You know, these drugs have been through their experimental phases, they went through massive clinical trials, you know,

with millions of people who were ready to sign up to help these things get through, and like the full resources of the world--the world--went at this at the same time. So it's a little disingenuous to call these experimental at this phase, although we are still learning information about the long-term effects, just like any other relatively new drug that comes on the market. But what we do know about these vaccines, is that they pretty much universally will stop you from dying of COVID, with very, very teeny tiny miniscule exceptions to that. But, you know, Pfizer and BioNTech have submitted their requests for full authorization, the Biden administration seems to be trying to move that along. But yeah, there are a lot more steps to go through for full approval. And I think the FDA and the other agencies involved are really trying to make sure that they check every box, dot every I, cross every T, just to not give people any reason to doubt the process. That said, having spoken to people who are hesitant or refuse to get the vaccine, you know, in my own life, I feel like it's a little bit of an excuse that people are using to, you know, do whatever they want to do anyway, and, you know, people get to make those decisions, but it costs the rest of us and, and for many of them, it costs themselves.

Kai Ryssdal: Yeah, I think one of the other interesting aspects about this being fully approved through the regular process, regular order, if I can mix my Washington regulatory metaphors, is what companies feel that they can do, right, whether companies who have been perhaps reluctant to say "you must be vaccinated to work at this company or patronize this company," if they've been hesitant because it's an emergency use authorization, that maybe it'll smooth away if it's fully approved. I don't know. I don't know. We'll see. I mean, there's a whole lot of, you know, behavioral economics on this thing, both by people and companies and institutions.

Kimberly Adams: Yeah, I mean, and you know, it takes usually between like, six to eight months for a priority vaccine review in normal circumstances. Non-priority vaccine reviews usually take about 12 months. So we are into the place where this should be getting done. So, fingers crossed, it'll happen soon. Alright, next question is about the fires out where you are. West.

Zara: Hi, this is Zara from Spokane, Washington. I live in the Pacific Northwest and lately I have been smelling quite a bit of smoke and at one point the sun was an eerily beautiful shade of red. And after seeing this crimson red sun, a question popped into my head. The question is, what are some of the economic effects of these fires? Thanks for making me smart!

Kai Ryssdal: Yeah, totally, so those sunsets are kind of amazing. Yeah, well, that was the thing, when I was in New York two weeks ago--I know, I was in New York two weeks ago--I'm walking along, I was on 47th Street, I'm walking along and I looked up and I said, wow, the sky's got that weird West Coast wildfire orange haze to it. And sure enough, it was the smoke and the particulates from the Oregon wildfire, the big giant one up there, which is just freaky. Just freaky.

Kimberly Adams: So if we want to just start high level, that's a big economic cost, the fact that smoke goes all the way across the country, there are effects on climate change, which do have--or global warming--I listened to you and Molly talking about that the other day. It does have that impact. And that, of course, has economic consequences downstream. But also,

there's the cost of fighting said fires, that's equipment, that's personnel. There are staffing shortages throughout the economy and that includes the people to do this incredibly difficult and often very dangerous work of fighting these fires, so it's expensive. There's property damage, and some of it's covered by insurance, which means everybody's insurance rates go up. But some of it not, which means that you might have FEMA or federal or state assistance stepping in, and that is effectively tax dollars. And then there's indirect costs. You've got the health care bills of people who are injured from smoke inhalation, trauma, and emotional damage for people who've been through these sorts of experiences. Disrupted businesses, there's a cost to that, there's a loss of the tax revenue from the business disruption or property taxes from people who lost their home. I mean, it goes on and on and on.

Kai Ryssdal: Yeah, it's, I mean, there's all kinds of costs, and Kimberly ticked through them and it's nothing good. There's nothing good about those fires. Full stop. Full stop.

Kimberly Adams: Yeah. You're not going away to anywhere with fires, right?

Kai Ryssdal: No, although, you know, interestingly enough, so we're going to Michigan for a whole lot of reasons. But I was--it might have been on Morning Edition, I think--some piece about how wildfires ain't just out west. And there were like, 200 wildfires in Michigan last year. And you're like, hello, you know? Yeah. Yeah. Anyway, so there you go. Next question. Joel in Virginia, I believe. Right?

Kimberly Adams: We're just bouncing from coast to coast.

Kai Ryssdal: I know, right.

Joel: Like many people fortunate enough to stay employed last year, I made a crucial investment in my quality of life and adopted a dog. Rocco, the Aussie Shepherd super mut, has changed my life in many wonderful ways. And he's had a major impact on my economic activity. In addition to new consumption habits, dog dadhood has influenced what I look for in a home. And when I recently changed jobs, it was important to be able to work from home a few days a week once we're back in the office. While I know there is no other dog in the whole wide world as special as my Rocco taco, I was curious to know, how has the pandemic inspired a surge in pet parenthood, influencing the economy, both today and looking forward? Love the show. Thanks for making me smart. Time for a walk.

Kimberly Adams: I love this.

Kai Ryssdal: That's awesome.

Kimberly Adams: Okay, you're the one with dogs, you go for it.

Kai Ryssdal: I know, what's interesting is that that has affected his home buying and moving and job prospects. I think that's freaking amazing. So look, we all know because we all saw on

social media or what have you, all the stories about people getting pets, shelters were empty, which is awesome. So here's just a random economic factoid for you: 2020 retail sales in pet products, thank you much, Marissa Cabrera and Grace Rubin, \$107 billion in 2020 for pet products and services, 9% up from the year before and well above regular pre-pandemic expectations. Here's the thing though. The good part is most people, aside from the anecdotal data of people returning their pets because they can't care for now that they have to go to the office or whatever, by and large people are keeping their pets and that's really, really good. So look, pets are important and, and I was, I'm ashamed to admit this, but not really given the company I'm keeping on this podcast, I was a cat person growing up, and I've become a dog person. And cats are fine now, but I mean, dogs are my people, man. Dogs are my people.

Kimberly Adams: I love dogs. I just can't deal. I live in a city and so you have to like, pick it up as you go, and I can't touch the warm even through the plastic bag. I can't do it.

Kai Ryssdal: So okay, this is a little bit TMI, but as I was out on the yard this morning, the backyard picking up the unmentionable, I thought to myself, you know, I could do a Twitter poll on this. Would you rather pick up warm dog poop or cold dog poop? That's what crosses my mind at seven o'clock in the morning when I'm picking dog poop up off the yard.

Kimberly Adams: Shout out to Jasper and his box. Goes in a box.

Kai Ryssdal: makesmesmart@marketplace.org

Kimberly Adams: Oh my goodness. But yeah, I was actually really--everyone in slack is saying cold, why is the question. I'm really glad to know that people are not terrible human beings because I think I would have died a little bit more inside if everybody had tried to dump their pandemic pets. And one of, one of our mutual former colleagues got herself a pet during the pandemic and has created an Instagram account for said pet. And I think that a large part of the origin of our company Slack channel dedicated to pets was all these people who got pandemic pets and it's very cute, and it definitely cheers me up on bad days.

Kai Ryssdal: That is awesome, that is awesome. Last thing, here we go. AC out of California pitched a new segment idea. Here you go: "I love when Kimberly Adams is on. However, why is there not an Uncle Davids update report? It is an easy path to joy," which is a really good point.

Kimberly Adams: So for people who may not know, I have two Uncle Davids who've been together a really long time. They're both like, named David and they wear matching outfits and I tweeted about them last year during the pandemic and people on Instagram and Twitter loved them and so that's what this is about. And so since I knew this question was coming, I did actually call them, I called them at breakfast this morning, and I asked them to send an update. So here you go.

Uncle Davids: Good Wednesday morning loved ones, and that excludes no one. This is Uncle Davids at Camp David--at Camp Davids--just giving an update. So let's see, what's been going

on, uncle David? Well, everybody's running around the neighborhood doing good. And the mother Muskogee is setting on 14 flaming eggs. Yeah, we're expecting a new bunch of baby ducks. Yes, soon. And the guineas and the chickens and the roosters are all doing good. The doorway to imagination is still holding up out there in the backyard. And this Saturday, August the seventh, is Uncle David's 71st birthday. So we're going to have a safe masked birthday party for him with just love, with local loved ones. So we just wanted to give you that update. And everybody take care and you indeed, all of our nibblings out there, you're our loved ones and that excludes no one. Saying that excludes no one. Hugs everybody. Bye bye. Bye.

Kai Ryssdal: That's not a bad life they're living out there. They've got quite the menagerie, man.

Kimberly Adams: They really do. And I keep telling them that it's really not appropriate for them to keep their duck in the house. But--

Kai Ryssdal: Oh, no, you can't keep a duck in the house! What?

Kimberly Adams: They were, they just, I think the duck is too big now, but like, the duck got pretty large before they finally like, moved it outside. And, so yeah.

Kai Ryssdal: Sorry, this is, this is perhaps an indelicate question. These are pets, right? Not, not food, these 14 that are gonna be born, the chickens and the guineas and all that.

Kimberly Adams: Yeah, the animals are all pets, the guineas and the chickens and the roosters. But if like one of them goes lame or something like that, they might have a different future in store or something like that. But I will say they use the word nibblings, which was a word I did not know before last year because they were looking for a gender-neutral term for nieces and nephews. And apparently it exists. It's called nibblings. And so, yes.

Kai Ryssdal: Googling it, hold on. Nibblings is a gender-neutral term. Look at that. Thought to be coined in the early 1950s, relatively obscure though for several decades. How about that? Learn something every day on this podcast, learn something every day. That's too funny. Good for them. Alright. We got to go. What do you want to know Wednesday is in the books for today. I am out tomorrow and Friday and all of next week; Kimberly's in charge. Meghan McCarty Carino is in tomorrow. Uhler is going to do a couple of stints in the co-host chair so you all will be well taken care of.

Kimberly Adams: I have all the power, all the power. In the meantime, keep sending your questions, we're at make me smart@marketplace.org or you can leave us a voicemail. Our number is 508-827-6278, also known as 508--UB-SMART. Megan is super on it with workplace things. She's our workplace culture reporter. And so if you have questions about the new workplace, she's great on that, Uhler is really excellent on stories about energy as well as sports, because I am not.

Kai Ryssdal: Sports things. A little bit of support from Andy you're there. One more thing before we hit the close music, it is au revoir, auf wiedersehen, goodbye, and thank you to Erica Phillips. Today, tomorrow--is it tomorrow, Bridget, or is it Friday? I think it's Friday. But anyway, this week is her last week at Marketplace and Make Me Smart. You know her from the newsletters that she writes, explainers. Also just a huge member of this team and we will miss her on slack, we'll miss her in meetings when we get back to having them in person and the occasional zooms. She's going to a new gig, she's going to be a reporter again, and so we are happy for her. We thank her so much for all that she's done in the two years here. Bunch of stuff on the morning show as well, so if you heard it on the air or if you read it in the newsletter, chance--on this podcast--chances are Erica Phillips had a bunch to do it. So--

Kimberly Adams: Or on the smart speaker.

Kai Ryssdal: Or on the smart speaker. Oh my God, who's gonna write those?

Kimberly Adams: Everything. Just everything. You're so awesome, Erica. Make Me Smart is produced by Marissa Cabrera. Today's program was engineered by Drew Jostad.

Kai Ryssdal: Ben Tolliday and Daniel Ramirez did our theme music. Our senior producer is Bridget Bodner, who likes to think she's in charge, but I don't know. She actually mostly is.

Kimberly Adams: I'm not gonna--you take that one by yourself.

Kai Ryssdal: Thank you!

Kimberly Adams: You're welcome.

Kai Ryssdal: All by my lonesome.

Kimberly Adams: Under the bus, at the corner. Have a great time off, Kai.

Kai Ryssdal: I will. See ya.