

Make Me Smart August 5, 2021 transcript

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Kimberly Adams: Rolling. Hey, I'm Kimberly Adams and welcome back to Make Me Smart, where we make today make sense.

Meghan McCarty Carino: And I am Megan McCarty Carino, thank you so much for joining us for this very special hollowed out shell Thursday. How's your shell, Kimberly?

Kimberly Adams: How, I mean, until I looked at your links, it was pretty, pretty good. But you're definitely on theme today. How about you?

Meghan McCarty Carino: Yeah, I have to say this is one of more hollowed out, hollowed out shell Thursdays days than I've had in a bit.

Kimberly Adams: Okay, well, before we get to that extra hollow news, if you find yourself wanting more Make Me Smart and not the terrible awful kind, but the smart that might also uplifts you and make you feel like you're more knowledgeable about the world, then I can recommend that you sign up for the Make Me Smart newsletter. It is a fun addition to your inbox even if you're not a daily listener, we have this whole Slack channel where everybody puts in ideas and then our wonderful newsletter editors sort through them plus contributions from the folks listening in and the audience, and it's a really cool newsletter, it has the news fix with stories that we didn't get into the show, plus recommendations for books and movies, all sorts of things from Make Me Smart listeners and the marketplace staff. It's totally worth your time on a Friday morning to read, so sign up at marketplace.org/newsletters.

Meghan McCarty Carino: Alright, shall we, shall we jump into it? Do the news?

Kimberly Adams: Yeah, you go ahead and go first.

Meghan McCarty Carino: Okay. Well, I hope my, my hope is that I will not bum things out too much. I kind of want to just process what's, what's out there in the news, and maybe bring things, bring things down a little bit. So there was this Newsweek cover that popped on my social last night it was like all over the place. And it's a little hard to do, like over audio, but if you have not seen it yet, it makes an impression. It's like this deep red cover of Newsweek with a giant Coronavirus on it, sort of like pulsing evil Coronavirus. And then it says "the doomsday variant, could the doomsday variant be coming?" And it just kind of, you know that with a number of other I've been seeing, people have been sending me headlines like all week about

Delta Plus, did you hear about Delta Plus? They have Delta Plus in South Korea now and what about Lambda? Lambda's coming next, that's gonna be the thing. And it's like, I just, I think we all just need to take a little deep breath here on the variant madness, like I know that Delta has certainly, I think, humbled us and given us a cause to be wary of what's coming down the pipeline and maybe learning from other places that have experienced variants before us. But, you know, at this point, I think there, there is a lot of sort of scare mongering in the, in the headlines, and there's a lot of prophylactic hysteria, I would call it.

Kimberly Adams: I'm sorry, what? One more time with that one.

Meghan McCarty Carino: Prophylactic hysteria, like we're, you know, sort of like protecting ourselves by just getting hysterical about everything before we even need to. A lot of, a lot of scientists that I follow—

Kimberly Adams: You should totally trademark that. No, but I mean, I hear your point, I hear your point. It's like, you know, we're getting a lot more information that it seems we have very clearly missed our opportunity to nip this thing in the bud. And now it's, we had a moment to do it, and we didn't do it. And now we're trying to figure out how we're going to navigate what comes next. And that cover is pretty striking. But also striking is the science coming out and the research coming out about how some of these new variants are spreading and this is why we now have this universal masking mandate. The situation in Florida is quite bad. And, you know, it's, it's a downer, but having the information is good and hopefully it will help us all make good choices about what comes next. What of this recent news is really jumping out to you?

Meghan McCarty Carino: Well, I think, so this, um, the Newsweek article is actually sort of based off of a report that came out from a group of scientists advising the British government and it kind of, it kind of just sort of spitballs all the worst case scenarios. And one of the things that they postulated is that it is possible that COVID could mutate into a form that would be both more transmissible and much more fatal, sort of like SARS-1 or MERS was, which had, both had a 30% infection fatality rate. And people kind of understandably got very alarmed about, about this report that kind of came out in, in the UK. But a lot of the scientists that I follow are sort of not pooh poohing this, it is absolutely possible that, you know, bad variants can emerge after this. We've seen bad variants like Delta that we weren't expecting emerging, but in terms of a variant that has all of the worst qualities, is, it's not necessarily or even remotely, the most likely outcome. So while certainly we want to keep track of this stuff, and, you know, have that, have some tabs on those, I think sort of like the level of like, okay, is this, is Coronavirus an extinction event for humans, I think maybe is not warranted at this point.

Kimberly Adams: Okay. Okay, Megan. Thank you. Thanks, Megan. Thanks, Megan.

Meghan McCarty Carino: No, in fact like the Lambda, Delta Plus, there is absolutely no evidence that these are out competing Delta, that they're more infectious than Delta, there is no evidence that they evade immune response, evade neutralizing antibodies more than Delta. So, so far, the news on the emerging variants that we know of, which are not yet variants of

concern, their variants of interest only, the news on those variants, Lambda and Delta Plus, so far, should not be a huge cause for worry.

Kimberly Adams: Yeah, I mean, we have really effective tools to try to keep ourselves and people around us safe, we have vaccines that will stop you from dying or being hospitalized at overwhelming, you know, rates. And, you know, even with these new variants, we saw in the last, you know, year and a half as we've been going through this, some amazing science, like the global scientific community stepped up and created and distributed these vaccines at a pace and rate unheard of in human history.

Meghan McCarty Carino: Speaking of which, more vaccines? Third, third shot? is that where you're hearing?

Kimberly Adams: So that was actually my news fix, is that the US is saying that it plans to give, work to give additional COVID-19 booster shots to Americans who have compromised immune systems as quickly as possible. And that came from Dr. Anthony Fauci today. This comes despite the World Health Organization saying to, you know, the Western countries and the wealthier countries, please, for the love of God, don't give anybody booster shots until the rest of the world can get vaccinated. And I think you're really going to see some of these more developed countries, and including the US, really stuck in a difficult situation of wanting to stop these variants from killing people here in the US, or these more severe, these more severe variants, this more severe consequence, causing additional problems here in the US. But at the same time, what is the, what are the ethics of this and the moral imperative of, you know, as the World Health Organization pointed out, you have 80% of the global vaccine supply coming to these countries that represent a relatively small proportion of the world. Meanwhile, other countries can't get access to the vaccine or can't afford to buy the vaccine and are really struggling. And so, you know, we talked earlier in the pandemic about the difficulty, and is the vaccine diplomacy, and who is going to get access first and who wasn't. And now we're facing a situation where to potentially protect people's lives, you know, those who have, having even more, and it's, it's a real moral, ethical conundrum spread out on a global scale. But one of the reasons that variants have been developing is because there have been unvaccinated groups of people and it's a global economy and people move around all the time. So that was super hollowed out, Megan. I desperately would like to smile.

Meghan McCarty Carino: Okay.

Kimberly Adams: Why don't you go first again?

Meghan McCarty Carino: Alright. I have a very good make me smile. I'm gonna redeem myself. So there's this British diver who won, who won the gold for men's synchronized diving, Tom Daley. He has had a lot of time in between his events and he has been taking that time--I don't know if you've seen this--but he's been taking that time to knit while he's in the stands, chillin out, he's been knitting what they call "jumpers," what they call sweaters. And today, he unveiled his beautiful Olympic sweater that he has been knitting while in the stands, and it is it is

a very beautiful sweater. And there's just something about, you know, like, the Olympians in the stands, knitting, that is very charming and, and cozy and comforting. Um, let me look up what he says.

Kimberly Adams: That sweater looks super cozy. Basically, it's got like, Team GB for Great Britain on the back and you've got a union jack on the shoulder and the, you know, Olympic rings, and it's, it's, it's got really nice like, edges and hemming, I'm not a knitter, but I mean, it looks pretty impressive to me.

Meghan McCarty Carino: This is a very professional looking sweater. Very profes, like he did a great job. It's got the union jack. Yeah, I mean, I don't know how you've been. I've been like, having the Olympics on in the background every night watching it. It's been giving me a lot of feelings, gonna say.

Kimberly Adams: I definitely have had feelings about the Olympics as well. My make me smile actually made me cry, but smile cry, because it's so lovely. There was a story about--oh, gosh, now I've lost the link--but basically these two high jumpers who are good friends, and they've known each other for a long time, but also competitors. And they basically got to this point where they kept jumping over this particular height about seven feet, nine inches. And they did it great. They did it great. But neither one of them could get to like 7'10. And so they could have done a jump off, which I just love that term jump off, and decided who the winner was. But instead, they decided to be co-gold medalists. And if you watch the video--okay, I'm gonna get emotional--if you watch the little video, you can just see them kind of look at each other and then they give each other a big hug and then they're both so happy and they go to their teams, and it's just like, yay, you can be competitors but also colleagues and have the wonderful spirit of collaboration. And it was, it's just a beautiful, beautiful moment from the Olympics. And also, since we're just talking Olympics, if you haven't seen the dressage video of the horse that was doing all the sort of pop songs to dressage and dressage is a sport where--the NBC Olympics account tweeted this video of this horse doing--well, the horse and rider, I should say--doing this dressage routine with "OMG, they're playing my song" in quotes, the horse at the club. Dressage is a sport where base, where the rider gets the horse to follow a pattern in a ring that, on that pattern, you're supposed to make the horse do various gates in various styles and various speeds of walking. And so it's like extreme horse rider communication and control. And it's sort of like the horse equestrian version of ballet. Anyway, it's typically done to rather stodgy music. And this was not, to too wonderful.

Meghan McCarty Carino: I think it was actually the song in that video from the SNL skit, like the, the one with Chris Kattan, like what is love? I think that's what the song was.

Kimberly Adams: I have no idea what you're talking about.

Meghan McCarty Carino: Oh, my God, people. You know what I'm talking about. You know what I'm talking.

Kimberly Adams: I don't know what you're talking about. But I do know that we're done. We have some help ourselves out.

Meghan McCarty Carino: Don't worry about the variants yet. That's it for us today.

Kimberly Adams: Well but still wear a mask and get vaccinated though.

Meghan McCarty Carino: Yes, yes. Okay.

Kimberly Adams: Please, for the love of God.

Meghan McCarty Carino: That is it for us today, we'll be back tomorrow for economics on tap and the YouTube live stream. That's at 3:30 pacific time, 6:30pm eastern time. And in the meantime, keep sending your questions, we are at makesmart@marketplace.org, or you can leave us a voicemail. Our number is 508-827-6278, also known as 508-UB-SMART.

Kimberly Adams: I love that every time. Oh my goodness. And send us your drink recommendations and for me mocktail recommendations because I'm taking a little time off. Yes. Make Me Smart is produced by Marisa Cabrera. Today's episode was engineered by Lianna Squillace and the senior producer is Bridget Bodnar.

Meghan McCarty Carino: Tony Wagner takes care of all our podcast publishing needs, including your favorite, the show notes and a round of applause for Erica Phillips, who has written and produced the Make Me Smart explainers and our newsletters and today, very sadly, is her last day. We will miss you so much.

Kimberly Adams: We'll miss you Erica, you're awesome. Yay, Erica. I don't know who's actually going to look at the links that I put in the newsletter recs channel now. Oh, look.