

strict social distance measures, transmission has continued within households with infected individuals. That is, transmission may not have declined as rapidly or as much in the community as these results would imply.

References

1. Mossong, J. et al. Social contacts and mixing patterns relevant to the spread of infectious diseases. PLoS Med. 5, e74 (2008).
2. <https://cmmid.github.io/topics/covid19/current-patterns-transmission/reports/LSHTM-CMMID-20200401-CoMix-social-contacts.pdf>

O P I N I O N

Jingles

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Do you also notice? Everywhere you go - from a communication perspective - you are confronted with totally inappropriate questions or advice. Years ago I started noticing this at the pharmacy or drugstore during the checkout of Xylometazoline, better known as nasal spray. The lady asked me if I wanted any advice. When I said that it was not necessary, that I would read the package leaflet, I was still told that I should not use the product for more than 1 week continuously. But that was years ago.

I just received a call from the helpdesk of my energy company, to make an appointment as part of my maintenance subscription when the technician could check our boiler. After we had agreed on the date and time and I want to hang up the phone, the young lady asks me somewhat uneasily if I feel good. For a moment I happily think that it is nice that the new generation shows a lot more interest in the ups and downs of customers. Just as I want to get started and talk about my recovery from a hernia, she adds that she "just" asks this in the context of the Coronavirus. Lots of forced mandatory conversations like this jingle in my head. At first I never know how to respond well. I quickly realize that I shouldn't have asked about her health like I did, it was just checking if the mechanic would be safe.

A few years ago, after I started to get more and more afraid of the drugstore cashiers who were as strict as old-fashioned and experienced village doctors, who were forced by their oath of Hippocrates to protect me from excessive medication with the nasal spray, I decided to initiate a conversation. I thought they would be delighted if I cleared the way to show their erudition. So right after they asked me again if I had any further questions about the drug, and just before they were about to jingle "do not use the spray more than 1 week straight", I decided to be brave. "Yes I have a question. What about the use with otitis media, can you tell something about that?" Of course, I had first looked up that Xylometazoline could provide relief by shrinking the mucous membranes in 3 inflammations: colds (rhinitis), middle ear infection (otitis media) and sinus infection (sinusitis). A nice conversation, in which the 'doctor' was able to show her wisdom, never followed. Instead, I was referred uncomfortably to my doctor, adding that I absolutely should not use the spray for more than 7 days in a row ... Such a crazy world! Disclaimers on cigarette packs, on medicines, on banking services and products, but not on the State Lottery, while crowds of low-income people gamble, resulting in even less spending space. Mandatory unsolicited advice literally spoils communication between employees and clients. It isolates us all to functionaries rather than people, while the economy in particular must continue. How do I explain this to my 11-year-old daughter? Corona forces us to stay a meter and a half apart, except in an airplane, because that's not economically feasible, and planes are screwing our world up. My daughter asks, "But Daddy, the Corona virus probably arrived by plane, right?" I suggest she just ask the lady of the drugstore, or the lady of the energy company! Scaling up leads to a lot of copy-and-paste, I think, but how do you explain that to an 11 year old?