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Word has spread like crackling hot flames through a dry prairie. Like a California brushfire.

I didn't think it would spread this fast. Not at first.

But once the news aggregators got it and started citing each other as the source, once Dr. Bradley Lynch got his dimpled chin into the mix and it hit CNN's news cycle...well...game over.

In retrospect it is easy to see why. In the beginning, the idea was too alluring to ignore. Now proven, it is too impossible to contain. It has captured the public's imagination. At this stage, controlling the message is like swimming against riptide. Like taking a barrel *up* Niagara Falls. Like peeing into wind.

Still I must try.

After all, it *was* my idea. Remember that.

Because when this all goes down, history will want to know whom to blame. And while it's too early to tell whether this missive will serve as confession or tribute, if it will be entered into evidence or used as notes for my tour of all the morning shows, it's June 15 date will mark the moment when I warned the world. The moment when I said it would get much, much worse before it gets even a little bit better.

Once I finish this missive, I'll post it immediately to my website then link it up with the social media, but it won't be enough. This tale is short, but not too short. It isn't 140 characters. It's more than a headline. It won't go viral.

Initially I was waiting for the CDC or WHO to make an official statement. As some of you know, I am affiliated with them both, have great respect for them both, but the reality is they swim in political waters. They are holding their tongue for the moment.

This can't wait for that. Time is short. Even as I write this people all over the world are hearing the news and rushing willy-nilly into forests and swamps and all manner of low-lying areas without thinking and without protection.

It is too early for that. Too early, I say! We are not ready to sound trumpets!
Enough prelude. Let me begin.

Mosquitos.

Hands down the most devastating insect to humankind, causing 700 million cases of illness every year.

How?

First off, there are all the fevers and viruses:

Dengue Fever.

Yellow Fever.

Chikungunya Virus.

West Nile Virus.

Flu like symptoms, then you die. That's truth.

Next, there are all the different encephalitides:

Japanese.

LaCrosse.

Western Equine.

Eastern Equine.

St. Louis.

Get one of those and your brain will swell in its shell up to bursting. Or your central nervous system will seize up, tossing you around like you're riding lightning. One in four will die if they get one of these.

Last, but certainly not least, there's a little thing called Malaria. In 2013 there were 198 million cases of Malaria resulting in an estimated 584,000 deaths.¹

How much is 584,000? That is Boston. Or Seattle. Or Denver. Or Milwaukee. Or Wyoming.

Once every 40 seconds, a child dies of Malaria. Three children have died since you started reading this missive.

If you paused to re-read that last statistic, make the total four. Four children.

Hearing these facts and figures, you are probably thinking what I thought—*what we thought*—ten years ago: we have to do something. We have to stop the mosquitos.

¹ Malaria Facts. (2015, March 4). <http://www.cdc.gov/malaria/about/facts.html>

Stop the mosquitos and you stop the transmission of these diseases. You eradicate 700 million cases of illness a year. You save Boston, or Seattle, or Wyoming. You save the children.

It was a no brainer.

We began.

Who are we? Myself, sure, but also a colleague: Dr. Bradley Lynch, of the Department of Infectious Disease Epidemiology at the Danbury College of Tropical Medicine. He's the handsome snake you see making the rounds to all the news shows now. The chief carrier. The bronzed one with the dimpled chin. The Willy Wonka of epidemiology, giving everyone a golden ticket.

It may be gilt, but it isn't golden.

Our hearts were pure.

The work started not in a lab, but with mathematical modeling. I won't burden you with the formulas, but suffice it to say that it was and is possible to predict all things mosquitos via mathematical equations: breeding patterns, reproduction rate relative to rainfall, population density, etc. Further, different models can also account and predict vector-borne diseases and their control by conventional sterile insect technology (SIT).

In short, we used math to see if a program of mosquito sterilization could reduce the population of mosquitos.

It could.

We were excited.

Eliminating the carriers of those fevers and viruses and encephalitides would save the children. We told others. We wrote grants. We partnered with governments and large holding corporations. We got money to build facilities in the tropics, mosquito factories, testing centers, labs, real research stuff.

Our enthusiasm made us blind.

We blundered ahead. Time passed quickly. Over the course of two years we were able to test a variety of programs and each program yielded better and better results. Mosquito sterilization programs with female mosquitos? Mosquito reduction of 17%. Of male mosquitos? 53%. Inserting delayed-action gene sterilization? As much as 84% in some areas.

This here was news.

But it is not *the news* that is going viral today. It is not Bradley Lynch's news, the news I am warring against.

Aaagh! Already this narrative is too long. How can it compete with the flashy headlines, with Wolf Blitzer! Still, I am loathe to cut. The public needs information, complete and unabridged. Knowledge is power. They need context. I have to hope they will keep reading, for if they listen only to Lynch's sound bytes and disregard this missive, those numbers I mentioned earlier? Will only increase.

I promise.

I digress. The point is we were making progress. Reducing the population of mosquitos by 84% in Malarial hot zones saves thousands and thousands of lives.

This was Nobel Prize winning stuff.

Then I had the idea.

It came quite by chance.

Much like a mosquito-borne illness.

It came to me while I was making preparations to return to Africa. My research team and I were heading to Liberia and Guinea for another release of the delayed action gene sterilization mosquitos, and in the run-up to leaving I received a Yellow Fever Booster shot, administered via injection in my upper arm. This is pretty standard. Every ten years everyone should update their yellow fever vaccination, especially if they are traveling and working in Malarial hotspots.

If you've read or seen the news you might know the rest Later that evening, while sitting outside on the porch, a tiny mosquito landed on my arm, right next to my slightly sore vaccination spot. I felt the prick acutely, just like any mosquito bite—just like any vaccination injection—and an instant before I swatted the mosquito away I was struck with the idea.

What if the female mosquito biting me was sucking in my Yellow Fever vaccine? What if, along with the blood and protein it used to nurture its eggs, she gave them a vaccination against Yellow fever?

My heart went to my throat.

What if the next human this lady mosquito (or her future offspring) bites wasn't infected, but...vaccinated?

Could we somehow genetically *install* a vaccination that matched the structure of these viruses and encephalitides to kill, block or eradicate them?

The answer—Bradley Lynch's "news"—was yes.

And the headlines sprang up around the world:

'Mosquitos cure Yellow Fever!'

'Mosquitoes save the world!'

'Malaria's carrier, now curer!'

'पीले बुखार को नष्ट कर दिया'

'Amo zanzare.'

'Le paludisme...disparu!'

'sốt vàng bị phá hủy'

'Vaccination on your front porch!'

These are just a sample.

No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no!

STOP!

Lynch's story is...aagh...how to put this...**not entirely accurate!**

I cringe as I re-read this. This is why this story won't get any traction. It is too nuanced to be sexy. Too 'not what people want to hear'.

Lynch claims we can vaccinate the world from Yellow Fever using mosquitos. He claims we will conquer Malaria next.

Not entirely accurate!

Stop listening to Bradley Lynch. We have accomplished virtually nothing.

Yes, we have managed to fix a trick with a single species of mosquito. Yes, that is news worthy, but before you go naked and DEET-less into the streets and swamps know this: There are 3,500 species of mosquitos in the world. Inserting a vaccine in ONE of these will not vaccinate the world.

Plus, given the short life span and quick reproductive cycle of the mosquito, the DNA structures of mosquitos are not stable. In short, what works with one generation of mosquito might not work for its descendants.

Plus plus, we haven't been successful with the Yellow fever mozzie, *aedes aegyptis*. Not to mention the host of other mosquitos known to carry Malaria, West Nile, Dengue or any of the encephalitides.

Yet the people are already dancing naked in the jungly equatorial streets, getting bitten left and right. I hear the rumbling of thousands of bare feet. The people are listening to the news, and they will pay for it. In the coming months, I predict at least a five-fold spike in the number of mosquito-born diseases.

More children will die.

All because I had an idea. All because Bradley Lynch carried the news. All because the public won't question the message.

The news is its own virus, the media is the carrier.

~Dr. Aman Ronson

#mosquitovaccinationsisalie

#mosquitosstillkill

#shootthemessenger

#iwastryingtohelp

#iamsorry