

By Nayden Kostov

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E-Book ISBN 978-2-9199-602-2-4

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PROLOGUE

Following the success of my trivia website, [RaiseYourBrain](#), I published several award-winning compilations of hard-to-believe facts that have reached hundreds of thousands of readers. One of the chapters in each trivia book was “Disturbing Facts about Our World”.

I decided to fill an entire volume with facts about upsetting crimes and mayhem, combined with unbelievable yet real instances of misfortune and misery. This is a book where grim examples of bigotry and hypocrisy are intertwined with amusing stories of bad luck. In the spirit of the times we live in, I dedicated a whole chapter to COVID-19 trivia and weird medical conditions. I am well aware that many potential readers might be overwhelmed by the condensed negativity, but hey... a fact is a fact! Continue to read if you are curious to learn:

- Why were the trousers of New Zealand’s farmers exploding?
- What is the depressing origin of the phrase “*Hip Hip, Hooray*”?
- Why did the Spanish Habsburgs royal family sleep with human mummies?
- Why was it legal in Iceland until 2015 to kill Basque people?
- Who was the “Deep Throat” informer from the Watergate scandal?
- How many people were killed trying to cross the notorious Berlin Wall?
- Why do snakes make a better pet than cats or dogs?
- How can millipedes cause a train crash?
- What is the etymology of “*thug*”?
- What are the chances of getting killed by rubbish falling from space?
- How did polygamist men in Kuwait manage to visit all their wives during the coronavirus lockdown?

However incredible these pieces of trivia might sound, all entries have been verified and fact-checked.

Chapter I



COVID-19 TRIVIA AND WEIRD MEDICAL CASES

1. True *polycoria* occurs when you have two or more separate pupils in one eye. Each pupil will have its own, intact sphincter muscle and will individually constrict and dilate. This condition can affect your vision but is extremely rare.

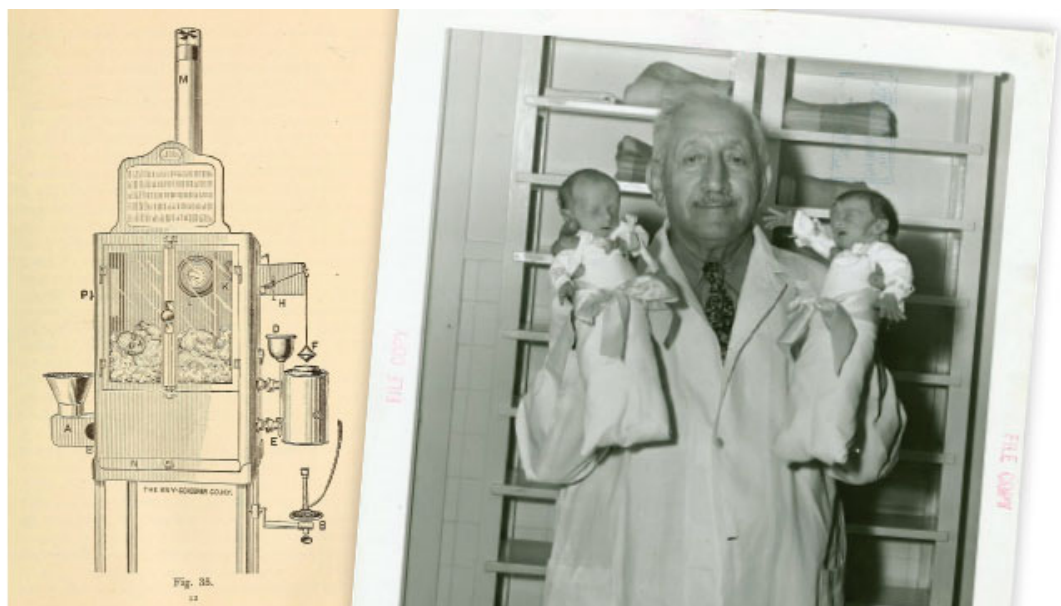


2. Kuwait's coronavirus lockdown created a logistical nightmare for polygamist men, who were facing jail time or steep fines for leaving their homes to split time with all of their wives. Polygamist men were eventually granted more flexibility, allowing for those married to more than one woman to obtain electronic permits for one-hour visits twice a week.
3. COVID-19 self-isolation in India is not easy – pushing people to self-isolate on trees, due to lack of space. The population density in India is 464 per km² (1,202 people per sq. mi).
4. In April 2020, during his daily White House briefing, US President Donald Trump suggested research into whether coronavirus might be treated by irradiating patients' bodies with UV light or by injecting disinfectant into the body. Many Americans misheard "ingestion of disinfectant", and in the following days, at least 100 people were admitted to hospitals after having swallowed various disinfectants.

5. During the coronavirus shutdown in 2020, US professional gamblers in Las Vegas requested to be acknowledged as “independent contractors” and thus be able to claim unemployment payments while the casinos remained closed.
6. Coronavirus test kits used in Tanzania were declared faulty by President John Magufuli in April 2020. He said they had returned positive results on samples taken from a goat and a pawpaw fruit. The samples had been secretly submitted to the labs as if taken from real people.
7. In March 2020, the terrorist organization ISIS issued a travel advisory for Europe to its fighters due to the then novel coronavirus pandemic, asking them to suspend travel to the region for terror attacks.
8. In the USA, consumption of Corona beer dropped by more than 30% since the start of the 2020 pandemic of COVID-19, aka coronavirus.
9. In the very beginning of the COVID-19 lockdown in Malaysia, the Women and Family Ministry disseminated some advice for the ladies: “Do not nag your husband, do not be sarcastic when asking for help with the housework, and keep dressing nicely and wearing makeup.” The campaign was subsequently withdrawn.
10. In early 2020, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, Thailand’s controversial King Maha Vajiralongkorn, also known as Rama X, self-isolated in a luxury hotel in the Alpine resort town of Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, with his entourage. The 67-year-old king’s entourage included a “harem” of 20 concubines and numerous servants.
11. A surgeon is three to four times as probable to be sued for medical malpractice as a psychiatrist is.
12. In 1695, Margorie McCall caught a fever and, believed to be dead, her family promptly buried her. Soon after she was laid to rest, grave robbers, who regularly ransacked newly buried coffins, dug her up and attempted to steal a valuable ring she was still wearing. Unable to remove the ring from her finger, the robbers decided to cut the finger off. But as they began their gruesome task, the lady awoke and scared the devil out of the grave robbers, who ran away. Margorie got out of her grave and went home, but when she got there her husband nearly died of shock. She lived on and even had another child after her ordeal before being buried once more in what proved to be her final resting place.
13. In 1962, the silicone breast implant was created, and the procedure was first performed on a woman in Texas, USA. Implants ruined the life and health of thousands of women and cost the manufacturers billions of dollars in punitive and compensatory damages. Many studies show that silicone breast implants are linked to certain autoimmune diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis, Scleroderma, Sjörger’s syndrome, and Sarcoidosis. Additionally, side effects include scarring, breast pain, infections, sensory changes, leakage or rupture of the implant, bruising, bleeding, blood clots, skin necrosis, asymmetry, nipple discharge, calcium deposits, etc.
14. The royal family of Spanish Habsburgs were devout Catholics, known for their extensive collection of relics of saints, which were kept close to their bedrooms:

many whole skeletons, over a hundred heads, and thousands of bones from all known saints. Whenever someone from the royal family would fall ill, they would try to heal by bringing a mummy into their bed.

15. In the period 1890-1940, there were more incubators for prematurely born babies in amusement parks than there were in hospitals. For some reason, doctors were not impressed by these machines, partially influenced by the eugenics theory that thrived at the time. Babies were displayed as an attraction and visitors paid money to see them. Desperate parents would bring their preemies in the hope that incubators would help their children survive. One of the most famous incubator-exhibit owners, Martin Couney, in fact strived to popularize the use of incubators. Couney claimed to have saved 6,500 babies over the course of his career and an overall 85% success rate.

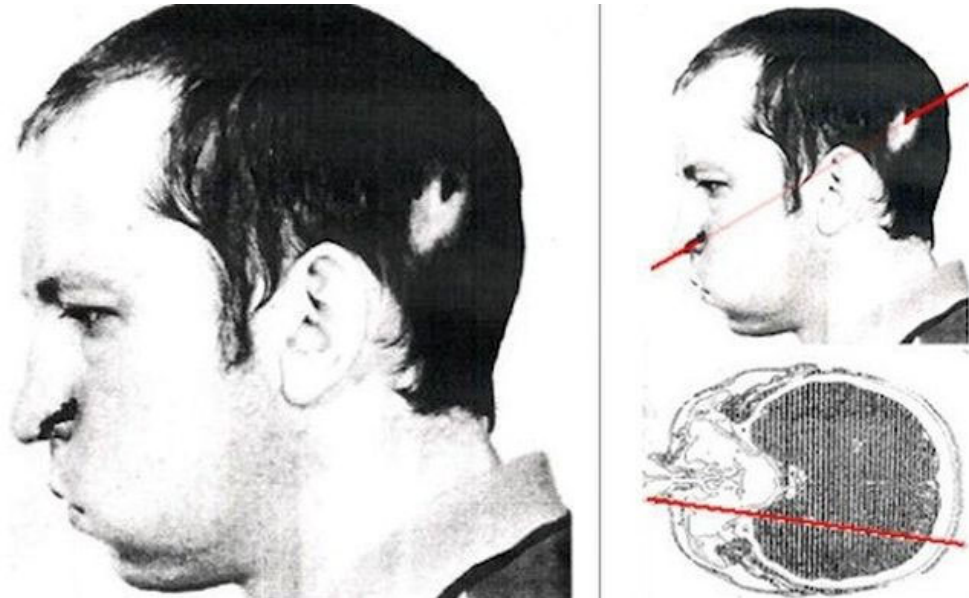


16. Crash-test dummies were first used in the 1950s and, for many years, they were based around the 50th-percentile male. Today, the most commonly used dummy measures 1.77 m (5 ft 10 in) tall and weighs 76 kg (168 lb), i.e. significantly taller and heavier than an average woman. The dummy also has male muscle-mass proportions and a male spinal column. As a result, female drivers are endangered in so many aspects. Men are more likely than women to be involved in a car crash, which means they dominate the numbers of those seriously injured in them. However, when a woman is involved in a car crash, she is 47% more likely to be seriously injured and 71% more likely to be moderately injured, even when researchers control for factors such as height, weight, seatbelt usage, and crash intensity. She is also 17% more likely to die.
17. Women die from heart attacks more often than men. This is because the vast majority of doctors are trained to look for symptoms, which, as it turns out, are typical for men but not always for women. Women tend to experience slightly more nausea, vomiting, and shortness of breath than men do when they are suffering from heart disease, and when they have a heart attack, women are less likely to have the classic feeling of chest pain that is associated with the event. Often, they describe a more subtle pressure or tightness, not full-blown chest pain because their smaller

arteries are more likely to be affected. These variations may be why doctors can miss signs of heart distress in women.

18. The Stockholm syndrome is a condition in which hostages develop a psychological alliance with their captors during captivity. Emotional bonds may be formed between captor and captives during intimate time together, but these are generally considered irrational in light of the danger or risk endured by the victims. According to the FBI, roughly 8% of victims show evidence of Stockholm syndrome. This term was first used by the media in 1973 when four hostages were taken during a bank robbery in Stockholm, Sweden. The hostages defended their captors after being released and would not agree to testify in court against them.
19. In 2018, Ekaterina Fedyaeva, a 27-year-old Russian woman, died in a medical procedure gone wrong when she was put on a formalin drip, essentially becoming embalmed alive. Doctors administered a solution containing formaldehyde instead of a saline solution during routine surgery.
20. Women in the USA have one of the lowest life expectancies among any of the advanced countries. The life expectancy for women lags 2.5 years behind other high-income countries. Researchers cited the USA's lack of universal healthcare, relatively high child and maternal mortality rates, and high rates of homicides and obesity as contributing factors.
21. In a 2003 observational study trying to assess prescription dispensing accuracy in some 50 pharmacies in six US cities, pharmacy researchers showed that the error rate was 1.7% for the 4,481 prescriptions reviewed. They identified 77 mistakes, five of which considered as "clinically important".
22. While text neck is not an official medical diagnosis, it is often describing a repetitive stress injury where immoderate texting or smartphone use is believed to be the primary cause.
23. Before the discovery of penicillin, in 1928, syphilis was incurable. It was a common practice for syphilis victims to cover their damaged noses with wooden prosthetic noses.
24. US children get a quarter of their vegetables in the form of French fries.
25. There was a time when pet food in the UK was safer than hamburgers. Until 1989, hamburgers contained ground cattle offal and entrails, while pet food did not.
26. According to Dr Chuck Gerba, Professor of Microbiology at the University of Arizona, USA, there are up to 200 times more faecal bacteria on the average cutting board than on a toilet seat. Bacteria do not necessarily get there through contact with faeces, but rather with raw meat.
27. Russian scientist, Anatoli Petrovich Bugorski (born 1942), was a scientist at the Institute for High Energy Physics. He worked with the most powerful Soviet particle accelerator, the U-70 synchrotron. On 13 July 1978, Bugorski was checking a

malfunctioning piece of equipment when the safety mechanisms failed, and a 76 gigaelectronvolt proton beam passed through his skull. As he was thought to have received far in excess of a fatal dose of radiation, Bugorski was taken to a clinic in Moscow where the doctors could observe his expected death. However, Bugorski survived and even completed his PhD.



28. Obesity has been recognised as a global epidemic by the World Health Organisation, followed by much empirical evidence to prove its infectiousness. If more people around you are obese, your own chances of becoming obese are also increased.
29. Worldwide, tobacco use causes more than 7 million deaths per year.
30. According to several studies, measles infections in children can wipe out the immune system's memory of other illnesses such as influenza. This can leave kids who recover from measles vulnerable to other pathogens that they might have been protected from before their encounter with the measles virus.
31. Thái Ngọc (born in 1942) is a Vietnamese insomniac, best known for his claim of being awake for more than 46 years as of this writing. Ngọc acquired the ability to live without sleep after an episode of fever in 1973, but according to the Vietnam Investment Review, there was no clear cause.
32. In the 19th century, there were documented cases of dental fillings literally exploding. One of the most plausible explanations is that a badly done filling offered the possibility of a build-up of hydrogen within a tooth (due to the mixture of the metals you have in the mouth, there might be spontaneous electrolysis). One spark was enough to cause an explosion.



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33. While only 2% of Europeans lack the gene for smelly armpits, most East Asians and almost all Koreans lack it. That is why it could be hard to buy deodorant in South Korea.
34. The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction conducted a study on drug consumption in 70 European cities. They acquired pretty good data by just screening wastewater for drugs.
35. Snow cleaning patterns in most towns and cities worldwide have been following the same approach for decades: clean major roads first, particularly those leading into and out of town, followed by smaller local streets. It turns out that these patterns benefit men and not so much women. Men more frequently commute to and from work, while many women drive all over to run errands. Women also walk more, often pushing a baby carriage as well. In Sweden, several city councils have recently reversed their approach, cleaning side roads and sidewalks first. It had a huge impact, reducing the people admitted to emergency centres, women in particular, and had a corresponding economic impact from lower healthcare costs. Driving through 10 cm (4 in) of snow, as it turned out, was less dangerous than walking through the snow.
36. Astronauts have long reported the experience of seeing flashes while they are in space, even when their eyes are closed. It was determined the astronauts were “seeing” cosmic rays passing through their eyeballs. Cosmic rays are high-energy charged subatomic particles whose origins are not yet known.
37. A US study in 2014 found that people who felt unwell on the day of elections were more likely to favour attractive candidates than their less physically appealing opponents.

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