

The famous creator of the Barnum & Bailey Circus once noted: "There is a sucker born every minute." Many people are ready to believe any nonsense they "hear about" or "they say," sources frequently offered by President Trump during his impromptu press briefings.

Most recently, fortunately, the President is followed by members of his science and medicine team, whose observations are science based, not hearsay. This is how we citizens can tell the difference between "fake news" and valid information. Be entertained by Mr. Trump but believe Dr. Fauci.

Unfortunately, the suckers born every minute do not bother to check the sources of the nonsense they hear or read, and then pass on to hordes of other suckers. The following are a few of the most common conspiracies and their sources, with the facts and their sources.

1. The government introduced the coronavirus in 2018, and Bill Gates was somehow responsible. The source of this was QAnon on You Tube, by Jordan Sather, who claimed that the media was being used to incite fear, along with Big Pharma, which wanted to make money off a potential vaccine. Sather then linked the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation helping to fund an unrelated project to study livestock disease and immunology to the outbreak of coronavirus, a claim totally devoid of fact.

Conspiracy spreaders cite a Gates presentation at a 2018 Massachusetts Medical Society and New England Journal of Medicine conference. Gates warned that if we had another flu pandemic like the one in 1918, the world would need to be prepared for it in the same serious way it prepares for war. The conspiracy theory was that Gates was promoting this concern for personal profit, never saying how he would profit from it.

2. There is a vaccine or cure for coronavirus that the government won't release. This was a viral Facebook post, purporting that a patent was filed by the CDC for the coronavirus so that pharmaceutical companies could benefit. How could a vaccine be even a government secret before there was an outbreak of this entirely new disease? (Nova-virus means that it is a previously unknown disease.) PolitiFact cites Amesh Adalja, a senior scholar at Johns Hopkins University: "there are no vaccines available for any coronaviruses let alone the (Wuhan) one," he said.

3. Coronavirus originated with Chinese people eating bats. The current working theory is that COVID-19 originated in a live animal market in Wuhan Province, but not from eating the bats. Characterizing an entire country's eating habits is both inaccurate and wildly offensive, according to Adam Kamradt-Scott, associate professor specializing in global health security at the University of Sydney. Chinese authorities have noted that many people who tested positive for COVID-19 had no contact with live animals prior to contracting the illness. We really do not know the original source of the crossover from animal vector to human.

4. The virus is no worse than the common cold. This gem came from conspiracy enthusiast Rush Limbaugh: "It looks like the coronavirus is being weaponized as yet another element to bring down Donald Trump." He then compares this "hoax" as similar to the "hoax" that the Russians meddled in the 2016 election. The scientists tell a different story. COVID-19 is not the common cold, which does not have the mortality rate of the 2 percent that Coronavirus has.

5. Hand dryers are effective at killing coronavirus. Indeed, if you use the hand dryers after a good soap and water or hand sanitizer wash first. Heat alone will not do it. (Advice from WHO)

6. Coronavirus is a bioweapon engineered by the Chinese government (or the CIA or the Israelis) to wage war on their enemies. Unfortunately for the conspiracy mongers, there's "absolutely nothing in the genome sequence of this virus that indicates the virus was engineered," according to Richard Ebright, professor of chemical biology at Rutgers University. And, of course, common sense would question why a country wishing ill on an enemy country would want their own citizens to die in such numbers.

Barnum was right. A sucker is born every minute. "People say" is not "fact."

687 words.

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