OUTBREAKS, EPIDEMICS, & PANDEMICS

Including the Worldwide COVID-19 Pandemic

A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR

Dear Students and Teachers,

Like you, I was minding my own business at the start of the year 2020. My rescue pup, Coconut, and I had been in Asheville, North Carolina for the holidays. (Coconut does not think much of snow!) In mid-February, we returned to our home in Beaufort, South Carolina. We had a lot of work, fun, and a few trips planned. We were looking forward to spring and summer—vacation, the beach, and things pretty much like they always were. And then, the whole world changed!

When I first heard about COVID-19, I got cold chills. Over the years, I had written a lot about germs. Anything that sounded like a "new" viral infection spooked me. Anything that had the words bat, contagious, or pandemic associated with it, outright scared me. Didn't such things always happen somewhere else? Sometimes, but this highly infectious coronavirus was heading our way. And, unlike the flu (which was still going around in early 2020) there was no vaccine or cure for this novel (new) coronavirus. However, I was not too worried. After all, we had WHO, the World Health Organization. We have the CDC, the Centers for Disease Control. Surely, we were ready for anything that might come our way—if it really did come our way. Right?

You know the rest of the story! COVID-19 did come to America! The United States was not quite as ready to respond to a pandemic as we might have thought. We sure were not prepared (or happy) to leave school, stay home, wonder what might happen next, and worry.

Now we know that we need to be GERMWISE all our lives! We can hope there will never be another pandemic. In the meantime, we can learn how and why such a thing happens, and how we can plan and protect ourselves—today and tomorrow.

Carole Marsh
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