

<http://somatosphere.net/2020/a-virus-podcast-goes-viral.html/>

A Virus Podcast Goes Viral

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By Thalia Gigerenzer

In the early days of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, a relatively obscure virology podcast called “[This Week in Virology](#)” suddenly became wildly popular. Seemingly overnight, the show suddenly gained tens of thousands of new listeners. Listeners from all walks of life — from postal workers to police officers to English teachers — were writing in with all sorts of questions, some of them scientific, some of them highly personal. Questions like: should I postpone my wedding? For many listeners, the effect of the show was therapeutic: they reported that the show’s reasoned tone (and frequent outbursts of laughter) had a calming effect on them. The show itself became a kind of interactive knowledge project—listeners from all over the world wrote in to share data points about the virus. It’s a story about public science, how scientific knowledge is produced in the face of extreme uncertainty, and the calming effect of casual conversation. (With a surprise appearance by Paul Rabinow at the end).

[Thalia Gigerenzer](#) is currently pursuing a PhD in Anthropology at Princeton University. Her dissertation research looks at friendship and intimacy among young Muslim women in Delhi, India. She formerly worked as a print and radio journalist, publishing in outlets such as the New York Times and National Public Radio. She has published a book about collective memory of communism in East Germany called [The Memory Laboratories](#). In her research, she uses sound and other media to experiment with ethnographic forms.

AMA citation

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