

STANDARD DEVIATIONS: Fly Your Flag

Greetings,

Here's hoping your Fourth of July was a good day. Some of us had the day off to enjoy with families, and some of us were doing that thing we do: laboratory work. Working the holiday is a two edged sword. The pay is good and usually the days are quieter, but we're away from our homes and working short staffed. We know that's the way it goes; people need our results no matter what day it is on the calendar.

Another guy who had to work is **Joey Chestnut**. He's the reigning World Champion of Nathan's Hotdog Eating Contest. Chestnut has won the contest 13 of the past 14 years! In 2020, he set a new world record, downing 75 HDB (hot dogs and buns) in 10 minutes.

Maybe it was the lack of distraction. You see, this year was different. Precautions in place for the contest changed the dynamics of the contest. This is what the contest typically looks like:



{2019 contest.}



But, this was the scene, this year:



{2020. Yum or yuck?}

Americans consume around 155 million hot dogs on the Fourth of July each year. They also spend \$92 million on chips, \$167.5 million on watermelon, and nearly a billion dollars on alcohol. Nathan's, who hold the hot dog-eating contest in Coney Island, donate 100,000 dogs to the NY food bank. Reigning champions: Joey Chestnut (Men's) 75 dogs. Miki Sudo (Women) 48 (also new record and 7th consecutive women's champ). Ranked the No. 1 competitive eater in the world, Chestnut holds a slew of nauseating 10-minute records, including nearly 13 pounds of deep-fried asparagus, 47 grilled cheese sandwiches, 25.5 pounds of poutine, and a whole turkey.

Seeing the preventive measures used for the competition is important because Nathan's has used health care in its image before. **Nathan's used to give away their dogs to hospital workers in lab coats to convince other customers of product safety!** The idea was that an image of hospital workers promoted the concept of hygiene and cleanliness.

Of course, that thinking has been changing. We know, now, that people in lab coats are the dirty ones not the clean. Nowadays we try to leave those germ encrusted garments where they belong



before heading out for Nathan's (or the cafeteria). Parading in PPE isn't patriotic, it's perilous. The MDs and RNs running around in scrubs everywhere make me cringe (AND they wear them home and pick up their kids!?!)

I once worked with a guy (let's call him Brain Burp) who never buttoned (they used to button!) his lab coat and always pushed up his sleeves. He believed that just having the coat on was protection. Do you know someone like this? His coat was worn long enough without washing that it stood by itself in the corner. Changing gloves was something newbies did (he was bad about wearing them in the first place). Luckily, that guy is gone. Now he advocates for keeping coats clean, closed and changed. He goes through gloves like crazy (FYI, BSL-3 protocol is double glove). And he never wears PPE outside the lab space. Personal Protective Equipment should be just that, personal and protective. When we expose others to the stuff on our PPE or use it in a way that undermines its function then it becomes a problem not a protection.

So. Let me beat this little drum: You should be thinking about PPE as a barrier between you and every sample you handle inside the lab. Establish what areas are dirty and clean and enforce those boundaries. Change PPE often. And by that I mean often, not regularly. Here is my soapbox speech...two lab coats designated as "yours" by your admin is just a cost thing not safety. **You should be changing PPE anytime YOU think you should and not base it on any availability or schedule. Change gloves a hundred times a day if you want; it's YOUR call.** Ask for disposable coats to be on hand. Plead for ample supply and argue safety over cleaning costs. Keep in mind that the lab is a dangerous environment and your obligation to yourself, your family, your coworkers and the community you work for is to protect everyone from that risk. PPE is temporary cover. Try to keep it simple, and always keep it in the lab.

Have a great week and be safe,

Bryan

Just for kicks:

- The vote to proclaim independence was held July 2, 1776.
- July 4 wasn't deemed a federal holiday until 1870, nearly 100 years after the nation was founded, along with New Year's Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas; but the 4th was only a holiday "within the District of Columbia". It didn't become a federal holiday until 1941.
- The oldest continuous Independence Day celebration in the United States is the 4th of July Parade in Bristol, Rhode Island; it began in 1785.
- The printed version of the Declaration was called the Dunlap Broadside; 200 were made but only 27 are accounted for.
- 57 signatures appear in geographical order; New Hampshire is at the top and Georgia at the bottom.
- The Philippines gained their own independence from the US on July 4, 1946 by signing the Treaty of Manila. Both the Philippines and Rwanda celebrate July 4th as a day of



liberation. In Southeast Asia, it is known as “Republic Day,” and Rwandans celebrate “Liberation Day.”

- One US president, Calvin Coolidge, was born on July 4.
- Three US presidents have died on July 4 — John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Monroe. In a bizarre twist of fate, Adams and Jefferson both died on July 4, 1826, the fiftieth anniversary of the country they helped found.
- It’s estimated that 88% (\$2.8 million) of U.S. flags sold are imported from China.

