

Be afraid, be *very* afraid!
By: Scott Kennedy

There is trouble brewing on the horizon. Just past the next corner, doom is beckoning. Or so we are to believe. Sure the world is changing; it isn't the Disney produced, candy coated, sugarland express that it once was. War, terrorism and global poverty are out there. And leading the news tonight – the new buzzword – Global Pandemic!

There is this nasty little bug going around Southeast Asia at the moment called the Bird Flu. According to quite a few folks out there we are on the cusp of the black plague of the 21st century. This badass is set to take down a good percentage of the world team, picking off the old and weak of the herd, like a lion stalking on the veldt.

Hold on a second here. This is starting to sound an awful lot like the big SARS scare a few years back. You remember the last plague that was supposed to kill us all, devastate the world, bla, bla, bla. There was a lot of freaking out at the time, including some pretty extraordinary measures taken in places like Singapore. I witnessed first hand an entire apartment block wrapped in shrink-wrap, like some kind of apocalyptic modern art installation. And then as quick as it started, poof, it was over. “Nope sorry folks, this wasn't the real plague, as you were.”

So with that experience in mind it is really hard to get worked up over the Bird Flu. Yes, a bunch of innocent chickens paid the ultimate price for their lineage and the badminton comp at the Commonwealth Games almost had to be called off because of a lack of shuttlecocks. But let's be honest here, this isn't exactly ripping through the population. Sure, some people have died from Bird Flu, but let's look at how they died.

If you were a farmer and you had a bunch of chickens that died from some mysterious illness, en mass, for seemingly no reason, would you take that dead chicken, toss it on the barbeque and feed it to the kids? Ah, no. It may be harsh, but I see it as natural selection. It seems to me like we need to tip a bit more chlorine into the gene pool. People who eat birds, which have just died of the Bird Flu, obviously aren't the brightest bulbs on the tree. The human species, as a whole, will benefit if these idiots are unable to breed.

So far, pigeons and morons are being taken out. But the health system here in NZ would want you to believe that we are within a week or two of Armageddon. Just look at the ads they are running on the telly at the moment. We are being instructed to stock up on Kleenex and to cover our mouths when we sneeze. All told in a cheery lilt, that the end is nye, but as long as we wash up before dinner, everything will be just fine. Give me a break, this is total fear mongering. The media and the drug companies are pandering to the weak minded, convincing them to buy, buy, buy if they want to live.

In this world of the internet and rampant self-diagnosis of medical problems, is it any wonder that we are scaring ourselves senseless? The best example of that is the trend of the cleansing diet. Everybody knows somebody who is on some sort of liver cleanse, or kidney cleanse or some other version of

the most unpleasant diet imaginable for a couple of days, weeks or months. We have to rid ourselves of all of the toxins, I'm not sure why, but we must! But then at the same time, we are being told to eat active yogurt, which is full of "good" bacteria. We need to use hand sanitizer to get all the bad germs off, but our kids are staying too clean and not building proper immune systems. Cut out bad cholesterol; increase good cholesterol, low fat, no fat, high protein, low carbs, carbo-loading, more wine, less wine! In the space of a generation we have gone from a balanced diet and some exercise to a fixation on our eminent mortality. How can we expect to sleep at night when all we are getting is a series of mixed messages?

So where does that leave us? There may or may not be a killer death spore bearing down on us. Everything that we eat is wrong, or maybe just right. And we may just be treating our intestinal tract like shit. Drug companies want us to be afraid so they can sell more flu meds and colonic detox kits. They want us to buy case loads of Kleenex and hand sanitizer because at the end of the day they are in business, not to keep us healthy, but to make money. It's that fact, the pressure to purchase perceived immortality, that's a hell of a lot scarier than some supposed pandemic. Big businesses selling us fear and getting rich in the process.