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Viruses, physics, sci-fi and public health - mysteries and similarities

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Abstract:

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought together specialists from many different fields - who would normally not meet during the course of their professional lives. In this light-hearted talk, I will compare some phenomena and mysteries in virology and physics (a passion for particle physics and cosmology since my school days) - and would be very interested to exchange thoughts with this unique CERN audience on some of these questions, such influenza seasonality, gain of function studies and origins of pandemic viruses, as well as how to deal with uncertainty in viral transmission risks and the precautionary principle - to prepare for the next pandemic. Within such areas of uncertainty, science fiction can flourish - and maybe even inspire new ideas about possible solutions to some of these conundrums - subject well covered in Hollywood movies and South Korean dramas, combining the world of viruses and physics of space-time travel.

My talk will cover the similarities between these fields and the mysteries still to be understood in view of preparing for the next global health crisis.

Presenter: TANG, Julian W (University of Leicester)