What Am I Missing Here?
Thought-Provoking Questions for the Clinical Research Industry
By Norman M. Goldfarb

265. Pay me now or pay me later...now would be better
Study sponsors commonly hold back 10% or more of the money sites have earned, presumably to ensure that the sites will continue to meet their obligations through the end of the study. Even though most studies are now on hiatus, sites do not want to lay off their staff since qualified people are so hard to find. The financial burden is not too severe for institutions, especially if study personnel can be reassigned to the clinic, but it is very severe for stand-alone sites and many small sites. Study sponsors that want to earn the undying allegiance of their sites — especially the proven performers — should immediately advance all or part of the held-back payments. What am I missing here?

266. Let’s get closer
We are now using social distancing to help prevent COVID-19 infection, based on the following assumptions:
1. COVID-19 is primarily communicated by respiratory exhalations.
2. Coughs and sneezes carry less than six feet.
3. We don’t know who is infected.
4. Three-layer masks help keep sick people from infecting others but N95 masks are needed to protect from infection.

Since we don’t know who is infected, why don’t we just have everyone wear three-layer masks or improvised fabric masks? Vulnerable people could wear N95 masks as they become available.

Any mask that protects other people might shrink the transmission range from six feet to maybe two feet, which would get us closer to normal life. In addition, we should all be carrying disinfectant spray jugs and sanitizing every surface in sight. I’m not a medical professional, a public health expert, or a virologist — and none have reviewed this column — but what am I missing here? [Breaking news: The CDC is now asking themselves the same question.]

Do you know a better way? Is something getting under your skin? Please send your ideas for future columns to editor@magiworld.org.

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