

# “Whoa!” “I’m crying!” “Worrisome!” “Buckle up!” The swift, complicated rise of Eric Feigl-Ding and his Covid tweet threads | Nieman Journalism Lab

By Jane C. Hue

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Eric Feigl-Ding picked up his phone on the first ring. “Busy,” he said, when asked how things were going. He had just finished up an “epic, long” social media thread, he added — one of hundreds he’s posted about society’s ongoing battle with the coronavirus. “There’s so many different debates in the world of masking and herd immunity and reinfection,” he explained, among other dimensions of the pandemic. “We at FAS, we’ve been kind of monitoring all the debates and how we’re seeing signals in which the data goes one way, the debate goes the other,” he said, referring to his work with the Federation of American Scientists, a nonprofit policy think tank. He rattled off a rapid-fire sampler of hot-button Covid-19 topics: the growing anti-vaxxer movement, SARS-CoV-2 reinfection and antibodies, the body of research suggesting masks could decrease viral load, along with a quick mention of the debate among experts about what “airborne” means.

This whirlwind tour through viral Covid-19 themes felt like the conversational equivalent of Feigl-Ding’s Twitter account, which has grown by orders of magnitude since the dawn of the pandemic. The Harvard-trained scientist and 2018 Congressional aspirant posts dozens of times daily, often in the form of long, numbered threads. He’s fond of emojis, caps lock, and bombastic phrases. The first words of his very first viral tweet were “HOLY MOTHER OF GOD.”

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