Morawska and others pointed to several incidents
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Dr. Benedetta Allegranzi, the WHOﹾs technical lead on infection control, said the evidence for the virus spreading by air was unconvincing.

ﹾEspecially in the last couple of months, we have been stating several times that we consider airborne transmission as possible but certainly not supported by solid or even clear evidence, ﹾ she said. ﹾThere is a strong debate on this. ﹾ

But interviews with nearly 20 scientists ﹾ including a dozen WHO consultants and several members of the committee that crafted the guidance ﹾ and internal emails paint a picture of an organization that, despite good intentions, is out of step with science.

Whether carried aloft by large droplets that zoom through the air after a sneeze, or by much smaller exhaled droplets that may glide the length of a room, these experts said, the coronavirus is borne through air and can infect people when inhaled.

Most of these experts sympathized with the WHOﹾs growing portfolio and shrinking budget, and noted the tricky political relationships it has to manage, especially with the United States and China. They praised WHO staff for holding daily briefings and tirelessly answering questions about the pandemic.

But the infection prevention and control committee in particular, experts said, is bound by a rigid and overly medicalized view of scientific evidence, is slow and risk-averse in updating its guidance and allows a few conservative voices to shout down dissent.

ﹾTheyﹾll die defending their view, ﹾ said one long-standing WHO consultant, who did not wish to be identified because of her continuing work for the organization. Even its staunchest supporters said the committee should diversify its expertise and relax its criteria for proof, especially in a fast-moving outbreak.

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