

Connecting Communities for COVID19 News

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Isolation Tips

How to heal the 'mass trauma' of Covid-19

When the pandemic is over, how should we process the memories of what happened? Ed Prideaux discovers counter-intuitive answers from the science of trauma. "After the pandemic ends, the effects of the mass trauma it has inflicted will linger across societies for years. How might we understand this mental fallout? And what does the science of trauma suggest that we should – and shouldn't – do in order to heal?" "Covid-19 is a mass trauma the likes of which we've never seen before. Our most complex social extensions, and the building-blocks of our personal realities, have been coloured indelibly. The ways we live and work together, and view each other as common citizens: everything means something different in the viral era, and with potentially traumatic effect. All pandemics end, however. And this one will. But to forget the trauma, move on, and pay it no mind, won't help. It'd be a disservice to history and our own minds. Maybe to the future, too. "

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20210203-after-the-covid-19-pandemic-how-will-we-heal>

COVID's mental-health toll: how scientists are tracking a surge in depression

As the COVID-19 pandemic enters its second year, new fast-spreading variants have caused a surge in infections in many countries, and renewed lockdowns. The devastation of the pandemic — millions of deaths, economic strife and unprecedented curbs on social interaction — has already had a marked effect on people's mental health. Researchers worldwide are investigating the causes and impacts of this stress, and some fear that the deterioration in mental health could linger long after the pandemic has subsided. Ultimately, scientists hope that they can use the mountains of data being collected in studies about mental health to link the impact of particular control measures to changes in people's well-being, and to inform the management of future pandemics.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-00175-z>

Hygiene Helpers

COVID-19 rarely spreads through surfaces. So why are we still deep cleaning?

The WHO updated its guidance on 20 October, saying that the virus can spread "after infected people sneeze, cough on, or touch surfaces, or objects, such as tables, doorknobs and handrails". A WHO spokesperson told Nature that "there is limited evidence of transmission through fomites. Nonetheless, fomite transmission is considered a possible mode of transmission, given consistent finding of environmental contamination, with positive identification of SARS-CoV-2 RNA in the vicinity of people infected with SARS-CoV-2." The WHO adds that "disinfection practices are important to reduce the potential for COVID-19 virus contamination". The CDC did not respond to Nature's queries about inconsistencies in its statements about the risks posed by fomites.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-00251-4#ref-CR10>

Britain's COVID-19 hotel quarantine policy to start Feb. 15

Britain's hotel quarantine policy for travellers arriving from COVID-19 hot spots will start on Feb. 15, the government announced on Thursday after critics said it was not moving fast enough to bring in the measures. The mandatory 10-day stay in government-provided accommodation, first announced last month, is designed to tighten borders against new variants of the coronavirus which could endanger Britain's vaccination programme. Opposition lawmakers have criticised Boris Johnson's government for not implementing the plan more quickly, saying the delay was putting lives at risk.

The prime minister said on Wednesday details would be announced on Thursday, only to be contradicted by his spokesman less than 24 hours later.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-britain-quarantine/britains-covid-19-hotel-quarantine-policy-to-start-feb-15-idUSKBN2A420C?il=0>

COVID-19 vaccine inequality could cause 'deadly consequences,' experts warn

Around 70% of the total coronavirus vaccine doses administered globally have been in the 50 wealthiest countries compared to only 0.1% administered in the 50 poorest countries, according to analysis by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). The IFRC described the disparity as alarming and said it could result in “deadly and devastating” consequences, warning that if large areas across the globe remain unvaccinated, the virus will carry on circulating and mutating. “This is alarming because it is unfair, and because it could prolong or even worsen this terrible pandemic,” Jagan Chapagain, Secretary General of the IFRC, said.

<https://cnnphilippines.com/world/2021/2/5/covid-vaccine-inequality-could-cause-deadly-consequences.html>

COVID: No special freedoms for the vaccinated in Germany

The German Ethics Council on Thursday spoke out against lifting restrictions for individuals who have been vaccinated against COVID-19. Germany has been in partial lockdown since November. Vaccinations started at the end of December with people over 80 and their carers front of the line. There is currently a shortage of vaccines in Germany, and it will take several months for a majority of people to be immunized and become eligible for the lifting of restrictions. Over the past few weeks tourism agencies, event managers and some politicians had suggested allowing those who have been vaccinated to travel, eat in restaurants, attend concerts and other events which would involve close contact with a high number of other people.

<https://www.dw.com/en/covid-no-special-freedoms-for-the-vaccinated-in-germany/a-56454942>

Face masks mandatory beyond WA lockdown

West Australians will be required to wear face masks while out in public and be restricted to seated service at bars and restaurants for another week when the state emerges from lockdown. WA has posted four consecutive days of no new community COVID-19 cases, paving the way for metropolitan Perth, the Peel region and South West to exit lockdown at 6pm on Friday. But Premier Mark McGowan has announced a range of restrictions will remain in place for Perth and Peel until 1201am on Sunday February 14.

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/7114081/face-masks-mandatory-beyond-wa-lockdown/>

Kaduna, Zipline sign agreement for drone-delivered COVID-19 vaccines

In Nigeria, Kaduna State Government has signed a deal with medical delivery firm Zipline that will allow drone shipment of COVID-19 vaccines without significant state investment in cold-chain storage. Zipline in a Reuters report noted that its end-to-end cold chain distribution capability can safely deliver even the Pfizer vaccine which would allow Kaduna health facilities to bypass purchases of ultra-low freezers and enable on-demand deliveries of precise amounts of COVID-19 vaccines.

<https://guardian.ng/news/kaduna-zipline-sign-agreement-for-drone-delivered-covid-19-vaccines/>

2 American cruise lines announced they will require all guests and crew members to receive the COVID-19 vaccine

Hornblower Group cruise lines will require COVID-19 vaccination. Both guests and workers must be vaccinated, and the protocol applies to all sailings starting July 1. The cruise lines still have trips lined up for April through June.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/american-cruise-lines-requiring-guests-get-covid-vaccine-2021-2>

Community Activities

Sixteen African nations show interest in AU COVID vaccine plan

Africa CDC director says countries asked for 114 million doses in total and allocations could be announced within three weeks. Sixteen African countries have shown interest in securing COVID-19 vaccines under an African Union (AU) plan, and allocations could be announced in the next three weeks, the head of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has said. While many rich nations have already begun mass inoculation drives, only a few African countries have started vaccinations, and the 55-member African Union hopes to see 60 percent of the continent's 1.3 billion people immunised in the next three years.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/4/sixteen-african-nations-show-interest-in-au-vaccine-plan>

Why Are So Many Health-Care Workers Resisting the Coronavirus Vaccine?

Despite confronting the damage of covid-19 firsthand—and doing work that puts them and their families at high risk—U.S. health-care workers express similar levels of vaccine hesitancy as people in the general population. Recent surveys suggest that, over all, around a third of health-care workers are reluctant to get vaccinated against covid-19. (Around one in five Americans say they probably or definitely won't get vaccinated; nationwide, hesitancy is more common among Republicans, rural residents, and people of color.) The rates are higher in certain regions, professions, and racial groups. This hesitancy is less outright rejection than cautious skepticism. It's driven by suspicions about the evidence supporting the new vaccines and about the motives of those endorsing them. The astonishing speed of vaccine development has made science a victim of its own success

<https://www.newyorker.com/science/medical-dispatch/why-are-so-many-health-care-workers-resisting-the-covid-vaccine>

Istanbul's population falls as countryside beckons during COVID

Istanbul's population fell last year for the first time in at least two decades as coronavirus lockdowns shuttered Turkey's commercial capital and attracted people to the countryside. The population of Istanbul province shrank 0.4% to 15.46 million, reversing record 3% growth the year before, according to data published by the statistics office on Thursday. The trend followed patterns seen elsewhere around the world during the pandemic. For decades, Turks from around the country of over 83 million have flocked to Istanbul seeking work and opportunities. But since the coronavirus hit, the government has implemented curfews to curb socializing and restricted opening hours for shops and restaurants, making young professionals reassess what they get for their money in big cities. Surrounding provinces were the beneficiaries, with the population of Tekirdag to the west up 2.4% to 1.1 million and Kocaeli to the east up 2.3% to 2 million. The pandemic also struck Istanbul's tourism sector and universities with tens of thousands of seasonal workers and college students staying away for much of the last year.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/2/4/istanbuls-population-falls-as-countryside-beckons-during-covid>

Help parents find a way to let their children exercise, ministers urged

The government needs to give parents a helping hand in providing children the exercise they need during the lockdown half-term, the UK's leisure industry body has said, after guidance on reintroducing sports clubs failed to materialise. With most schools across England set to break up in 10 days' time, a period without traditional learning for many children will be followed by one without recourse to sports clubs or activities, as research continues to show a decline in physical activity among the young. Ukactive, which represents the British leisure sector, has been calling for government to provide a "recovery plan" for ensuring physical activity can be safely reintroduced into schools both during term time and holidays

https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/feb/04/help-parents-find-a-way-to-let-their-children-exercise-ministers-urged?utm_term=Autofeed&CMP=tw_t_gu&utm_medium&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1612427786

Working Remotely

Leading from afar: how managers can navigate the world of remote work

With remote working reducing the everyday chit-chat that goes hand-in-hand with office life, “you miss out on getting to know things that can help you manage that person effectively by knowing their personality”, says Max Freeman, commercial manager at Cartridge People. Introducing a “virtual brew time” helped Freeman’s team to experience the kind of interactions they might have in the office. When speaking to staff over video, he makes a point of asking how things are going outside work, as well as making a note of any events they’ve got coming up and asking how their family members are getting on. “It’s a crucial part of getting the best out of a team,” he says. “You can still find ways to get it right even when working remotely.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/getting-back-on-track/2021/feb/03/leading-from-afar-how-managers-can-navigate-the-world-of-remote-work>

How 'Work From Home' Became 'Work From Anywhere'

The way the pandemic reshapes where and how we work could be one of the most visible legacies from the health crisis. In the U.S., lockdowns sent many wealthy knowledge workers fleeing to suburbs, second-tier cities, and “Zoom towns” in scenic areas near ski slopes or national parks. While most people will eventually return to an office, things might look different than before. It all has the potential to profoundly impact office culture, labor markets, city finances and the American landscape.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/storythreads/2021-02-04/how-work-from-home-became-work-from-anywhere>

Remote working: fad or redefining trend?

Will we all be trundling in and out of our offices in a year’s time or will half of the country’s office space be redundant? The remote working trend is very real in lockdown, but in a post-pandemic world will it stick? It has been latched on to by the rural lobby in Leinster House as potentially something that could halt rural depopulation and revitalise the ailing economies of villages and towns across the State. The Government published a remote working strategy earlier this month, saying it would “lead by example”, setting a target whereby at least 20 per cent of public servants will be working remotely by the end of the year.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/business/work/remote-working-fad-or-redefining-trend-1.4475459>

Home workers putting in more hours since Covid, research shows

Employees who work from home are spending longer at their desks and facing a bigger workload than before the Covid pandemic hit, two sets of research have suggested. The average length of time an employee working from home in the UK, Austria, Canada and the US is logged on at their computer has increased by more than two hours a day since the coronavirus crisis, according to data from the business support company NordVPN Teams. UK workers have increased their working week by almost 25% and, along with employees in the Netherlands, are logging off at 8pm, it said.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/feb/04/home-workers-putting-in-more-hours-since-covid-research>

UK home-working rises to highest since June on COVID lockdown

The proportion of British workers working solely from home rose to 36% in the week to Jan. 31, its highest since June when the country was emerging from its first coronavirus lockdown and up from 34% the week before,

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-britain-economy-idUSS8N2IB05A>

Virtual Classrooms

Virtual learning adds to university students' skills, says economics professor

Online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has allowed university students to develop a wide array of new skills, says an associate professor of economics at the University of Toronto. Many students thrive on human interaction, but Elizabeth Dhuey says many of her students are benefiting

from taking university classes online. "This is really going to help them in the long-term because this is the future of their work," she told Information Morning Moncton.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/university-applications-grade-12-students-1.5900561>

It Takes a Village: How School Librarians Support Virtual Learning

It's no secret that virtual learning has been a challenge in the United States. Thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, many K-12 students have been engaged in some version of distance education since March 2020. Whether hybrid or entirely remote, the learning curve has been steep for teachers, caregivers, and students. However, teachers are not alone in their efforts to provide supports to students and families. Across the country, library media specialists are finding innovative ways to support virtual learning. From sharing digital resources to collaborating on instruction, school librarians are stepping up to meet this new challenge.

<https://bookriot.com/how-school-librarians-support-virtual-learning/>

Public Policies

Iran receives its first batch of foreign coronavirus vaccine

Iran on Thursday received its first batch of foreign-made coronavirus vaccines as the country struggles to stem the worst outbreak of the pandemic in the Middle East. The shipment consists of 500,000 doses of Russian-made Sputnik V vaccines which arrived at Tehran's Imam Khomeini International Airport from Moscow, the semi-official Fars news agency reported. Also Iranian state TV quoted Tehran's ambassador to Russia, Kazem Jalali, as saying that Iran has ordered 5 million doses from Russia. The next batches are to arrive on Feb. 18 and Feb. 28, said Jalali.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/iran-receives-its-first-batch-of-foreign-coronavirus-vaccine-iran-coronavirus-vaccines-vaccine-coronavirus-country-b1797692.html>

Cuomo hit with lawsuit over Covid-19 vaccinations for inmates

Public defenders filed a lawsuit against Gov. Andrew Cuomo Thursday, seeking to force him to allow prisoners to get the Covid-19 vaccine. Two men currently locked up at Rikers Island who want to get vaccinated are named as plaintiffs in the class action lawsuit, brought on behalf of everyone incarcerated at Rikers and other city jails. Legal advocates have demanded that Cuomo allow access to the shot behind bars, where the coronavirus is raging, but the state so far has not budged on expanding eligibility.

<https://www.politico.com/states/new-york/albany/story/2021/02/04/cuomo-hit-with-lawsuit-over-covid-19-vaccinations-for-inmates-1361881>

COVID-19: MEPs want to ensure developing countries' access to vaccines

COVID-19 vaccines should be produced also in developing countries to overcome the pandemic, development MEPs told Commissioner Urpilainen on Thursday. "Distributing vaccines globally is our exit strategy from the pandemic," International Partnership Commissioner Jutta Urpilainen told the Development Committee, adding that the Commission will coordinate a "common EU vaccine sharing mechanism", in which EU countries can donate part of their vaccines through the COVAX program, especially when vaccine production is scaled up. The EU is also seeking to scale up production capacity in developing countries and to contribute to strengthening their regulatory framework in the pharmaceutical field, she said

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20210201IPR96811/>

To avoid lockdown, France cracks down on Covid rule breakers

The scene at the small Parisian cafe looks almost normal: smokers queueing for a pack of cigarettes, gamblers buying lottery tickets or picking up betting slips for the races. That is, until the police walk in, reminding customers, and the owner, that nothing is the same in the Covid pandemic. "There are too many people here, count them," an officer orders his team.

<https://www.rfi.fr/en/to-avoid-lockdown-france-cracks-down-on-covid-rule-breakers>

North Korea to receive nearly 2 million AstraZeneca vaccine doses in first half of the year

North Korea has requested COVID-19 vaccines and is expected to receive nearly two million doses of the AstraZeneca-Oxford COVID-19 vaccine by the first half of this year, said agencies leading the COVAX vaccine-sharing programme. The COVAX Facility will distribute 1.99 million doses of the vaccine produced by the Serum Institute of India, according to the COVAX interim distribution report on Wednesday (Feb 3).

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/north-korea-covid-19-vaccine-astrazeneca-covax-who-14111534>

Western Australia lifts lockdown as raft of restrictions kick in

Western Australia is preparing to take steps out of its snap five-day lockdown with a raft of restrictions to be lifted at 6pm on Friday. Premier Mark McGowan said the state will forge ahead with lifting its lockdown after a week-long testing blitz uncovered no new cases as of 8pm on Thursday. People in the Perth and Peel areas will be free to leave their homes from tomorrow night, with masks mandatory both indoors and outdoors and on public transport. However, masks will not be required during vigorous outdoor exercise. Community sports may also resume.

<https://www.msn.com/en-au/news/australia/western-australia-lifts-lockdown-as-raft-of-restrictions-kick-in/ar-BB1do5Vh?viewall=false&c=15334124169855211043&mkt=en-us>

Singapore approves Moderna COVID-19 vaccine

Singapore on Wednesday approved the use of a second COVID-19 vaccine for individuals 18 years and above. The Moderna COVID-19 vaccine is the second to be approved after the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine currently being used. The Expert Committee has independently reviewed the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine's safety and efficacy data for different population segments in Singapore, and has been briefed by The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) on its full range of considerations in granting interim authorisation, and is satisfied with its safety and efficacy. "In assessing the suitability of vaccine candidates for specific population groups, the Expert Committee took into consideration the safety, efficacy and tolerability of the vaccine and data adequacy of clinical trials. The Moderna COVID-19 vaccine demonstrated a high vaccine efficacy of 94%, and its safety profile is consistent with the standards set for other registered vaccines used in the immunisation against other diseases," a release on the Ministry of Health website stated.

<https://www.connectedtoindia.com/singapore-approves-moderna-covid-19-vaccine-8876.html>

Mexico approves emergency use of Russia's Sputnik V COVID-19 vaccine and orders more than 7 million doses

Mexico authorized the use of the Russian Sputnik V vaccine on Tuesday. The approval of the coronavirus vaccine comes a week after President Andrés Manuel López Obrador reached an agreement with President Vladimir Putin. During Tuesday's announcement, Deputy Health Minister Hugo López-Gatell said Mexico will receive 7.4 million vaccine doses between February and April. The government also started the second phase of its vaccination process for people over the age of 60. The coronavirus pandemic has slammed Mexico with 159,333 confirmed deaths - the third-most in the world - and 1,874,092 cases

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9214861/Mexico-signs-contract-millions-Russian-Sputnik-V-vaccine-doses.html>

New Zealand gives provisional approval to Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine

The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine has been provisionally approved for use in New Zealand, where the government will begin vaccinating frontline healthcare and border workers in the coming months. Jacinda Ardern, the prime minister, said the approval was a positive step in the country's fight against Covid-19, of which there have been fewer than 2,000 cases nationally. In New Zealand the approval of medicines and vaccines falls under Medsafe, which also provides independent advice to

the government. Although the assessment of the Pfizer vaccine was fast-tracked in New Zealand, it was not given the pace of an “emergency” medicine as the virus has been largely under control.

<https://www.msn.com/en-au/news/world/new-zealand-gives-provisional-approval-to-pfizerbiontech-vaccine/ar-BB1dkOEZ>

Nicaragua approves Russian COVID-19 vaccine

Nicaragua’s government said Wednesday that it had approved Russia’s Sputnik V COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use. “Nicaragua is advancing in its negotiations with Russia to supply” the vaccine, said the government outlet El 19 Digital. It was the first vaccine approved in Nicaragua, which still awaits its first doses. The government had said in January that it had initiated efforts to acquire vaccines from various laboratories around the world and hoped to vaccinate 3.7 million people in an initial stage.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/nicaragua-approves-russian-covid19-vaccine-nicaragua-vaccine-government-co-vid-ap-b1797208.html>

AstraZeneca vaccine approved for use in Ireland by Minister for Health

Ireland has received a major boost in the vaccine rollout plan, as the AstraZeneca vaccine has been approved for use in the country. COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca is given as two injections into the arm, the second between 4 to 12 weeks after the first. The Government's target of vaccinating 700,000 people by the end of March was contingent on the arrival of 600,000 AstraZeneca doses. However, 300,000 vaccines will be delivered instead as a result of a delay.

<https://www.buzz.ie/news/astrazeneca-vaccine-approved-for-use-in-ireland-by-minister-for-health-416188>

EU drugs watchdog partners with regulators on COVID-19 vaccines, drugs

Europe’s drugs regulator said on Thursday it had started sharing COVID-19 vaccine and treatment expertise with its counterparts in several countries, aiming to speed up regulatory processes around the world. The pilot aims to speed up development and assessment of COVID-19 medicines and make them available to the public faster, the European Medicines Agency said, adding that the collaboration comes “at a time when vaccine hesitancy has increased.” It said that the collaboration, which began in December, will promote overall transparency and may increase public trust in the vaccines and therapeutics as regulatory decisions are open to peer-review.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-regulators-collaborat-idUSL4N2KA32D>

U.S. Senate Democrats push ahead on road to new COVID-19 relief

The U.S. Senate, in the throes of a marathon debate over the shape of President Joe Biden’s \$1.9 trillion coronavirus aid plan, voted overwhelmingly on Thursday to exclude upper-income Americans from a new round of direct payments to help stimulate the economy. By a vote of 99-1, the Senate approved an amendment recommending that high-income earners not qualify for a new round of government checks that could amount to \$1,400 for individuals. Republican Senator Rand Paul was the lone dissenter. Details of the income cap would still have to be worked out in subsequent legislation. “The decent compassionate thing is for us to target the relief to our neighbors who are struggling every day to get by” during the coronavirus pandemic, said Democratic Senator Joe Manchin, author of the proposal.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-usa-congress/u-s-senate-democrats-push-ahead-on-road-to-new-covid-19-relief-idUSKBN2A421V>

Qatar reimposes restrictions amid surge in COVID-19 infections

The measures affect education, leisure and business activities as the Gulf country seeks to head off a potential second wave. Qatar has reimposed a series of coronavirus-related restrictions on education, leisure and business activities, including closing indoor swimming pools and theme parks and restricting restaurant capacities. The measures came into effect on Thursday, a day after they were first announced as the country battles a surge in new COVID-19 infections.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/4/qatars-renewed-covid-19-restrictions-come-into-effect>

Oxford/AstraZeneca Covid vaccine given full approval by EU regulator

The European Medicines Agency has authorised the Oxford/AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine for use in all adult age groups after days of doubt. A month after it received approval in the UK, the EU's regulator declared the vaccine safe for general use across the 27 member states. The shot is the third Covid-19 vaccine given the green light by the EMA, after ones made by Pfizer and Moderna. Both were authorised for all adults. There had been concerns that a lack of data about the effects of the vaccine on older people could put authorisation for those aged over 65 in doubt.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/29/oxford-astrazeneca-covid-vaccine-full-approval-eu-regulator>

Maintaining Services

Outrage as 'people jump queue for a coronavirus vaccine' after being sent NHS link

Non-priority groups including Public Health England workers and friends of NHS staff have been jumping the queue for the coronavirus vaccine jab. Over a hundred members of PHE staff at Porton Down, Wiltshire, have had the treatment, even though they are not in any of the qualifying categories. The director at the facility insisted they were spare doses that would have gone to waste if they had not been used - but would not comment on the total

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9224203/Outrage-people-jump-queue-coronavirus-vaccine-sent-NHS-link.html>

Covid: UK 'past the peak' but levels 'forbiddingly' too high to relax lockdown

It is too soon to imagine the relaxation of lockdown restrictions in England, with infection levels of coronavirus "still forbiddingly high", the prime minister has said, though the UK is thought to be "past the peak". Boris Johnson said the UK's Covid vaccination programme has provided "some signs of hope", with 10 million people having received their first jab, but he warned the NHS is still "under huge pressure". The PM said his plan remains to set out a plan, on February 22, for an exit out of lockdown but the "level of infection is still forbiddingly high for us to imagine relaxation of currently guidelines".

<https://www.itv.com/news/2021-02-03/covid-uk-past-the-peak-but-levels-forbiddingly-too-high-to-relax-lockdown>

Restaurants face 'wave of bankruptcies' after lockdowns

The food services sector has been hit hard by the Coronavirus pandemic, but governments are struggling to find ways to reopen safely. On Monday, Italy eased restrictions in sixteen regions, allowing restaurants and museums to reopen after months of closure. But the country remains an exception in Europe. In Brussels, the streets of the normally lively city centre have been eerily empty for more than three months now. To make matters worse, the sector has had to adjust to wildly zig-zagging policy decisions over the past year that have varied enormously between different countries.

<https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/news/restaurants-face-wave-of-bankruptcies-after-lockdowns/>

The Health 202: How West Virginia beat other states in administering coronavirus vaccines

The Biden administration will start shipping extra coronavirus vaccine doses straight to pharmacies, hoping to speed the process of getting shots into arms. But in West Virginia — which has administered the vaccines faster than any other state except Alaska — officials lament that the new allocations will not be going directly to the state to distribute. "We're appreciative of any help we're given, but we would appreciate it more if we would get it delivered to us and in our system," James Hoyer, the director of the Joint Interagency Task Force for Vaccines in West Virginia, said yesterday.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/02/04/health-202-how-west-virginia-beat-other-states-administering-coronavirus-vaccines/>

COVID-19 challenges continue across US

As the United States continues to roll out doses of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, states continue to struggle with how best to reach the elderly and minorities, groups at greater risk for severe COVID-19. In Mississippi, 38% of state residents are black—the highest in the nation—but only 17% of the state's vaccine recipients have identified as black. An NBC News analysis on that state shows several barriers to accessing the vaccine: Many residents live far from a drive-thru vaccination site and lack access to a car. Similarly, announcements made about open vaccination slots and registration times are missed by people without reliable internet access.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/02/covid-19-challenges-continue-across-us>

Healthcare Innovations

COVID-19: Mix and match coronavirus vaccine trial results to be available by summer

Covid trial in UK examines mixing different vaccinesBBC NewsWho should get which coronavirus vaccine?The Indian ExpressMore than 10 million people receive first dose of COVID-19 vaccine in UKGOV.UKCoronavirus vaccine calculator shows when you'll get first and second doseBirmingham LiveView Full coverage on Google News

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-volunteer-recruitment-begins-for-study-that-will-mix-and-match-vaccines-1220762>

Covid-19 patients are most infectious one day BEFORE symptoms appear, study reveals

Covid-19 patients are at their most infectious one day before they develop symptoms, a mathematical study reveals. Researchers used a computer model to process data on viral load — the amount of coronavirus a person is infected with — and how it decreases throughout infection. Previous studies have found viral load aligns with infectivity and also increases the likelihood of death, meaning an infected person with a high amount of the virus in their system is more infectious and also at greater risk of dying from Covid-19.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/medical/covid-19-patients-are-most-infectious-one-day-before-symptoms/ar-BB1domWH>

COVID-19: 15.3% of England's population estimated to have had coronavirus by mid-January

About one in seven people in private households in England had contracted coronavirus by mid-January, according to Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimates. The figure is equivalent to 6.9 million people - 15.3% of the population. The estimate is up from one in nine people in December last year, and one in 11 people in November. The numbers are the proportion of the population who are likely to have tested positive for antibodies to COVID-19, based on blood test results from a sample group aged 16 and over.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-15-3-of-englands-population-estimated-to-have-had-coronavirus-by-mid-january-12207328>

Covid-19: International travel 'biggest impact' on deaths

International travel had the biggest impact on Covid death rates for countries hit in the pandemic's first wave, a study has found. Researchers in Aberdeen focused on the world's worst affected 37 countries. They examined factors including border arrivals, population density, the percentage of people living in urban areas, age, and health issues. The team said early restrictions on international travel could have made a difference in the spread. The study looked at counties including America, the UK, Spain, France, Italy and Brazil, and focused on the early stages of the pandemic. They found an increase of one million international arrivals was associated with a 3.4% rise in the mean daily increase in Covid-19 deaths.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-north-east-orkney-shetland-55919040>

Variant detected in UK reported in Italian town

The Netherlands has become the latest European country to limit AstraZeneca's coronavirus vaccine to people aged under 65, despite the European Union approving it for all ages. France, Germany, Belgium, Denmark and Sweden are among the other countries to put age limits on the vaccine, which was developed by the company with Oxford University. "Because the immune system starts to function less well with increasing age, the council considers the vaccine suitable for people up to the age of 65," the Dutch Health Council said in a statement. The council said it "recommends that the first available doses of the vaccine from AstraZeneca be used in elderly people aged 60 to 65 years".

<https://www.rte.ie/news/coronavirus/2021/0204/1194968-coronavirus-global/>

Danish scientists see tough times ahead as they watch more contagious COVID-19 virus surge

On its face, the curve of COVID-19 infections in Denmark looks reassuring enough. A nationwide lockdown has led numbers to plummet from more than 3000 daily cases in mid-December 2020 to just a few hundred now. But don't be fooled. "Sure, the numbers look nice," says Camilla Holten Møller of the Statens Serum Institute, who heads a group of experts modeling the epidemic. "But if we look at our models, this is the calm before the storm." That's because the graph really reflects two epidemics: one, shrinking fast, that's caused by older variants of SARS-CoV-2, and a smaller, slowly growing outbreak of B.1.1.7, the variant first recognized in England and now driving a big third wave of the pandemic there. If B.1.1.7 keeps spreading at the same pace in Denmark, it will become the dominant variant later this month and cause the overall number of cases to rise again, despite the lockdown, Holten Møller says. "It is a complete game changer."

<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2021/02/danish-scientists-see-tough-times-ahead-they-watch-more-contagious-covid-19-virus-surge>

COVAX publishes first interim vaccine distribution forecast

The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and the World Health Organization, as co-leads of the COVAX initiative for equitable global access to COVID-19 vaccines, alongside key delivery partner UNICEF, are pleased to publish COVAX's first interim distribution forecast. Building on the publication of the 2021 COVAX global and regional supply forecast, the interim distribution forecast provides information on early projected availability of doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine in 1st quarter of 2021 and the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine candidate in first half of the year to COVAX Facility participants.

<https://en.mercopress.com/2021/02/04/covax-publishes-first-interim-vaccine-distribution-forecast>

Oxford Covid vaccine team is working on a 'second generation' jab - here's how long it could take

Researchers who worked on the Oxford/AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine are already working on a so-called "second generation" Covid jab, designed to be effective against mutated strains of the virus. While the existing vaccine is thought to be effective against the 'Kent' strain which emerged in the South East of England, there are concerns about other strains which are starting to appear all over the world. New Covid variants have been identified in South Africa and Brazil recently, prompting worries that existing vaccines may not be entirely effective against these.

<https://www.scotsman.com/health/coronavirus/oxford-covid-vaccine-team-working-second-generation-jab-heres-how-long-it-could-take-3123836>

Cambodia approves emergency use of China's Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccine

Cambodia has officially approved the emergency use of China's Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccine in the Southeast Asian country, according to a Ministry of Health statement on Thursday. "The Ministry of Health of the Kingdom of Cambodia authorized the emergency use of Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccine

that has been developed by the Beijing Institute of Biological Products Co., Ltd of the People's Republic of China," Health Minister Mam Bunheng said in the statement. Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen said on Thursday that the first batch of Sinopharm vaccine donated by China will arrive in Cambodia on Sunday, Feb. 7. "When the vaccine arrives at the Phnom Penh International Airport, I will go to receive it by myself," he wrote on his official Facebook page.

http://www.china.org.cn/world/Off_the_Wire/2021-02/04/content_77189191.htm

Novavax Sees U.K. Vaccine Approval First; in Talks With FDA

A new Covid-19 vaccine from Novavax Inc. is likely to get its first approval in the U.K., and the company is discussing with U.S. regulators whether trial data from other countries could be part of the shot's review, Chief Executive Officer Stan Erck said. The company announced late Thursday that the vaccine was effective in big trials in the U.K. and South Africa, though its protective power appeared to be reduced in South Africa, where a worrisome mutation is prevalent. Novavax is still recruiting patients for a trial in the U.S. and Mexico, but the U.S. Food and Drug Administration could consider authorizing the vaccine based on the results from abroad, Erck said in an interview on Bloomberg Television. "We are hoping we can take that data package to the FDA and have them evaluate our vaccine based on the U.K. data while we are running a phase 3 trial in the U.S.," Erck said. "We are talking to them. We don't have a definitive answer yet."

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-29/novavax-ceo-sees-u-k-vaccine-approval-first-in-talks-with-fda>

COVID-19: Fourth vaccine could be approved in weeks as trial shows it is effective against UK variant

A fourth COVID-19 vaccine could be approved for use in the UK within weeks after late-stage trials suggested it was 89% effective in preventing coronavirus. The prime minister has said the Novavax jab is now going to be assessed by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). If approved, the vaccine would start to be rolled out in the second half of 2021. The UK has already ordered 60 million doses, which are going to be manufactured in Stockton-on-Tees.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-fourth-vaccine-could-be-approved-in-weeks-as-trial-shows-it-is-effective-against-uk-variant-12201833>

Covid-19: Israel sees new infections plummet following vaccinations

Early findings from Israel's covid-19 vaccination programme suggest that the rollout of the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine is leading to fewer new infections and is at least 50% effective 13 to 24 days after the first dose. Israeli Ministry of Health figures, reported by the BBC,¹ found that only 531 people out of almost 750 000 fully vaccinated over 60 year olds tested positive for covid-19 (0.07%). Of these, just 38 were hospitalised with moderate, severe, or critical disease. The ministry analysed the records of nearly one million people between their first vaccine dose to at least seven days after the second dose. They found that there were three covid-19 deaths in vaccinated over 60s, but said it was possible they contracted the virus at an earlier stage before their immunity had time to build up.

<https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n338>

Johnson & Johnson asks US to approve single-dose COVID jab

Johnson & Johnson said on Thursday it has asked United States health regulators to authorise its single-dose COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use. The drugmaker's application to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) follows its January 29 report in which it said the vaccine had a 66 percent rate of preventing infections in its large global trial. J&J's single-shot vaccine could help boost supply and simplify the US immunisation campaign, amid concerns of fresh surges due to the more contagious UK coronavirus variant and the potential of lower vaccine efficacy against the variant that first emerged in South Africa. Unlike the two currently authorised vaccines from Pfizer Inc/BioNTech SE and Moderna Inc, J&J's does not require a second shot or need to be shipped frozen.

After the company's application, regulators will need time to analyse the data and an advisory committee will need to meet. The company's chief scientific officer said last month J&J was on track to roll out the vaccine in March.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/2/4/johnson-johnson-asks-us-to-approve-single-dose-covid-jab>

'Insufficient data': Switzerland declines to approve AstraZeneca vaccine

Switzerland will not approve the AstraZeneca vaccine, saying there is insufficient data to do so. This may have implications for the country's vaccination plan. The Swiss regulatory authority said Wednesday that data submitted by AstraZeneca were not sufficient for it to authorise use of the Anglo-Swedish firm's Covid vaccine, saying "new studies" were needed. The decision is not final, with the Swiss government instead saying more data on the safety, efficacy and quality of the vaccine is needed to make an accurate approval assessment. "The data currently available do not point to a positive decision regarding benefits and risks," Swissmedic said in a statement

<https://www.thelocal.ch/20210203/insufficient-data-switzerland-declines-to-approve-astrazeneca-vaccine>

Regulatory approval of COVID-19 vaccine for restricted use in clinical trial mode

Covaxin is India's first indigenous vaccine against severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), developed through a collaboration between Bharat Biotech and the National Institute of Virology, which is a branch of the Indian Council of Medical Research, the Indian official authority for medical research. The development team isolated a strain of SARS-CoV-2 from patients with asymptomatic infection and developed a vaccine on a Vero cell-line manufacturing platform to deliver the inactivated coronavirus strain. On Jan 3, 2021, the vaccine was granted approval "for restricted use in emergency situation in public interest as an abundant precaution, in clinical trial mode",¹ which raised several concerns across the scientific society.²

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099\(21\)00045-1/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099(21)00045-1/fulltext)