

# Connecting Communities for COVID19 News

## 16th Apr 2021

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### Isolation Tips

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#### **One in three say self-isolating has negative effect on wellbeing**

More than a third of adults in England have found self-isolating after testing positive for Covid-19 has had a negative effect on their wellbeing and mental health, new figures suggest. Some 36% of adults surveyed said self-isolation had a negative impact, while 59% reported no effect and 4% said it had a positive effect. Around three in 10 people (28%) reported a loss of income, while 14% of those who had been working prior to self-isolating – either in or outside their home – said they were not paid during the self-isolation period.

<https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/uk-news/2021/04/15/one-in-three-say-self-isolating-has-negative-effect-on-wellbeing/>

#### **Covid-19 pandemic likely have 'profound' effect on mental health**

Mental health problems associated with the Covid-19 pandemic are "likely to be profound and felt for many years". That is according to a newly-published research paper on suicide from the Northern Ireland Assembly. It said there was "emerging" evidence the mental health of younger people in particular had been "disproportionately affected". The paper warned, though, conflating declining mental health with suicide and suicide risk should be avoided. It said to do so could increase the risk of normalising suicidal behaviour.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-56736593>

#### **How Working From Home Changed Wardrobes Around the World**

Have months of self-isolation, lockdown and working from home irrevocably changed what we will put on once we go out again? For a long time, the assumption was yes. Now, as restrictions ease and the opening up of offices and travel is dangled like a promise, that expectation is more like a qualified "maybe." But not every country's experience of the last year was the same, nor were the clothes that dominated local wardrobes. Before we can predict what's next, we need to understand what was. Here, eight New York Times correspondents in seven different countries share dispatches from a year of dressing.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/15/style/working-from-home-wardrobes.html>

### Hygiene Helpers

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#### **CDC reports 5800 COVID-19 infections in fully vaccinated Americans**

About 5,800 people who have been vaccinated against coronavirus have become infected anyway, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tells CNN. Some became seriously ill and 74 people died, the CDC said. It said 396 -- 7% -- of those who got infected after they were vaccinated required hospitalization. This is the CDC's first public accounting of breakthrough cases, and the agency is searching for patterns based on patient age and gender, location, type of vaccine, variants and other factors.

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/cdc-reports-5-800-covid-19-infections-in-fully-vaccinated-americans-1.5388245>

#### **Pfizer CEO says third Covid vaccine dose likely needed within 12 months**

Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla said people will "likely" need a booster dose of a Covid-19 vaccine within 12 months of getting fully vaccinated. He also said it's possible people will need to get vaccinated

against the virus annually.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/04/15/pfizer-ceo-says-third-covid-vaccine-dose-likely-needed-within-12-months.html>

### **Covid-19 vaccine passports could create 'two-tier society', equality watchdog warns**

Introducing vaccine passports risk creating a 'two-tier society' which could lead to millions feeling discriminating against, the Government has been warned. The Equality and Human Rights Commission also believe mandatory Covid-19 status certificates - which would provide proof of whether you've had two doses of the jab - are "likely to be unlawful". It could create a situation where people from groups where vaccine take up is lower are barred from social events, venues and even travel.

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/covid-19-vaccine-passports-could-23916668>

### **Hong Kong widens COVID-19 vaccine scheme to under 30s**

Hong Kong authorities said on Thursday that the city's vaccine scheme would be widened to include those aged between 16 to 29 years old for the first time, as they aim to boost lackluster demand for inoculations in the Asian financial hub. Hong Kong has seen a relatively slow take-up of vaccines since rolling out the scheme in February, with only around 8% of Hong Kong's 7.5 million residents having been inoculated so far. Patrick Nip, Secretary for the Civil Service, said that the widening of the scheme would enable a total of 6.5 million residents to take part. "We appeal to the public to take the vaccine as soon as possible so HK won't fall into the vicious cycle of wave after wave of outbreak," he said.

<https://uk.news.yahoo.com/hong-kong-widens-covid-19-082648751.html>

### **COVID-19: Pilot mass gatherings to be supported by government-backed compensation scheme**

Large-scale event pilots that are testing the viability of mass gatherings will be supported by a government-backed compensation scheme. Up to £300,000 will be made available to organisers should an event have to be cancelled. It comes after a minister previously said that such a scheme could end up "pulling the rug" from big events.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-pilot-mass-gatherings-to-be-supported-by-government-backed-compensation-scheme-12276114>

### **NHS trusts in London preparing to make Covid vaccinations compulsory for workers, leaked email reveals**

A major NHS trust in London has discussed making vaccinations against coronavirus a contractual requirement for all its staff, according to a leaked email seen by The Independent that also reveals other trusts may follow suit. The letter to staff at the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital Foundation Trust, signed by the chief executive Lesley Watts, has not yet been sent to staff but has been shared with dozens of senior NHS bosses across London for them to "adapt and use in your trusts." Adding a contractual requirement for a vaccination to employment contracts would constitute a change in terms and conditions for staff and is likely to be legally difficult to enforce.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Idoa3O9QOMGNRjmDRtQJ5-pBKcQfTpJr37uAnbudtLg/edit#gid=993920817>

## **Community Activities**

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### **Ivanka Trump causes MAGA meltdown after sharing photograph getting vaccine**

Donald Trump's daughter Ivanka Trump took to Twitter to announce that she got the Covid-19 shot and encouraged others to do the same, a move that has caused a meltdown among anti-vaxxers and conservative supporters of the former president. The former first daughter broke her three months of social media silence on Wednesday posting a photo of her taking the coronavirus vaccine injection, with the accompanying note: "Today, I got the shot!!! I hope that you do too! Thank you Nurse Torres!!!" Ms Trump's enthusiastic tweet about the coronavirus vaccine met with several

angry responses from Trump supporters who called it a disappointment and accused her of “virtue signalling.”

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/ivanka-trump-vaccine-covid-twitter-b1831839.html>

### **Shop workers, hairdressers and bar staff key to tackling loneliness and mental health in pilot scheme launched in York**

Shop workers, hairdressers and bar staff across North Yorkshire will be part of a new scheme aimed at tackling isolation, loneliness and mental health following the Covid-19 pandemic. The pilot - named Community Conversations - will be launched in the Groves and Clifton areas of York and will involve staff at numerous businesses and organisations having specialist free training to help them spot the signs that someone may be at risk of mental health and as a result engage with them and signpost them to help and support.

<https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/health/shop-workers-hairdressers-and-bar-staff-key-to-tackling-loneliness-and-mental-health-in-pilot-scheme-launched-in-york-3201319>

### **Homeless Americans finally getting a chance at COVID-19 shot**

Homeless Americans who have been left off priority lists for coronavirus vaccinations — or even bumped aside as states shifted eligibility to older age groups — are finally getting their shots as vaccine supplies increase. While the U.S. government has only incomplete data on infections among homeless people, it’s clear that crowded, unsanitary conditions at shelters and underlying poor health increase the danger of COVID-19 infections, severe complications and death. COVID-19 outbreaks have been documented at homeless shelters in cities such as Boston, San Francisco and Seattle. Vaccinating in vulnerable areas will be a key to achieving herd immunity, the goal of building a barrier of protected people to stop uncontrolled spread.

<https://apnews.com/article/homeless-shelters-san-francisco-health-coronavirus-pandemic-seattle-3aa7e2314032079c16d50d942a53531b>

### **1 in 5 Americans say they won't get COVID-19 vaccine**

A poll published yesterday from Monmouth University found that 1 in 5 Americans remain unwilling to get the COVID-19 vaccine. Partisanship continues to be the defining factor determining which Americans are willing to get vaccinated and which are not: 43% of Republicans say they will avoid the vaccine, compared with just 5% of Democrats, and 22% of independents say they want to avoid getting the vaccine altogether. A new Quinnipiac University poll shows 45% of Republicans are unwilling to get the vaccine. A poll from the University of Michigan also suggests age may be a factor. Only 20% of teens and young adults polled last October said they were unwilling to get vaccinated, and that percentage shrank to 15% last month.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/04/1-5-americans-say-they-wont-get-covid-19-vaccine>

### **Unsung COVID vaccine heroes—and biotech science giants—star on influencer's TikTok**

Ready to meet the science heroes behind the world's first COVID vaccines? Ready to watch them dance on TikTok? Anna Blakney thinks you are. She’s an assistant professor and vaccine researcher at the University of British Columbia coaxing some of the mega-accomplished scientists behind the vaccines to join her in off-the-cuff choreography and conversation. So far, she’s been joined by Robert Langer, MIT Institute professor and Moderna co-founder, and Pieter Cullis, the co-founder of Acuitas Therapeutics behind the Pfizer and BioNTech vaccine.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/marketing/covid-vaccine-unsung-heroes-and-biotech-science-giants-star-influencer-s-tiktok>

### **Working Remotely**

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**Long-term remote work is sending many of us from the home office to the physical therapy clinic**

Physical therapists in Massachusetts and Rhode Island told me that although business plunged during the lockdown in the first half of 2020, they soon saw a surge of patients complaining about head, neck, shoulder, and back pain linked to ergonomically unsound home office setups. “Beds and couches have become workstations,” said Don Levine, cofounder of Pappas OPT Physical, Sports and Hand Therapy in Middletown, R.I. “They put a lot of stress on the low back and neck. Even working at the dining room table can cause issues, as hard surfaces and poor posture will increase the pressure on structures in the back.”

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/long-term-remote-work-is-sending-many-of-us-from-the-home-office-to-the-physical-therapy-clinic/ar-BB1fGxvo>

### **“I Do Not Trust People in the Same Way and I Don’t Think I Ever Will Again”**

The real problem, I suspect, is that in the past year, we’ve experienced a massive loss of trust in our institutions and in one another. After watching the government mislead and fail us on such a massive scale, with hundreds of thousands of people dying as a result of those failures, of course people are skeptical now. We’ve spent the past year not being protected by the institutions that were supposed to protect us and learning that we’d have to protect ourselves. So even at companies that have acted responsibly throughout the pandemic, employees are naturally anxious. When you’ve spent months watching businesses reopen while case numbers rose and governors giving that their blessing, as unsurprising new waves of infections followed, it’s pretty understandable to feel apprehensive of any new timelines for a return to “normalcy.”

<https://slate.com/human-interest/2021/04/office-reopening-anxiety-fear-mistrust.html>

## **Virtual Classrooms**

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### **Independence teacher earns national recognition for innovative approach to virtual learning**

Although virtual learning proved difficult for many educators, Jill Wagner, a veteran teacher with the Independence Local Schools, embraced the challenge wholeheartedly. Now, her innovative online teaching methods are receiving national recognition. Wagner earned a place in “Portraits of Awesome,” an initiative related to Ted Dintersmith’s book, “What Schools Could Be.” A profile of Wagner and her work will soon be viewed by educators nationwide. In addition, Wagner received a \$250 educational grant, a certificate of recognition and a swag bag for teachers.

<https://www.cleveland.com/community/2021/04/independence-teacher-earns-national-recognition-for-innovative-approach-to-virtual-learning.html>

### **Virtual learning furthers challenges for students with hearing and speech difficulties**

Amid months of virtual instruction in Jefferson County Public Schools and partner institutions, students with hearing and speech impairments encountered exceptional challenges learning online. At the Heuser Hearing and Language Academy in Louisville, education director Debbie Woods said only two students will graduate from a program that nearly 15 students complete in a normal year. “When they leave we test them to see if they have reached their peers who are typically hearing. A lot did not reach that milestone this year and that is because of the pandemic,” she said.

<https://www.wave3.com/2021/04/15/virtual-learning-furthers-challenges-students-with-hearing-speech-difficulties/>

### **UNC students are learning in professor's new virtual reality classroom during pandemic**

With the coronavirus pandemic forcing university students and faculty off campus, UNC-Chapel Hill professors are taking unique approaches to online and remote teaching, which began last week. A UNC law professor went viral for sending students a prerecorded lecture he gave to a Pinocchio doll. Others are hosting Zoom calls with more than 100 students and pets tuning in. One mailed virtual reality headsets to his students so they could meet in a virtual classroom he built. Steven King, an associate professor at the Hussman School of Journalism and Media, made the switch to remote classes into an experiment by creating a virtual reality experience that kept his students in the

classroom.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/technology/unc-students-are-learning-in-professors-new-virtual-reality-classroom-during-pandemic/ar-BB1fVrP>

### **Covid-19 changed education in America — permanently**

A year later, it's clear that the Covid-19 pandemic has changed education in America in lasting ways, and glimpses of that transformed system are already emerging. School districts are developing permanent virtual options in the expectation that after the pandemic, some families will stick with remote learning — even for elementary school kids. Hundreds of colleges have, for the first time, admitted a freshman class without requiring SAT or ACT scores, potentially opening admissions to the most selective colleges to more low-income students. And thousands of educators across the country, from preschool to college, are finding new ways to spark their students' creativity, harness technology and provide the services they need to succeed. The pandemic has unleashed a wave of innovation in education that has accelerated change and prompted blue-sky thinking throughout the system.

<https://www.politico.com/news/2021/04/15/covid-changed-education-permanently-479317>

## **Public Policies**

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### **Oxford/AstraZeneca Covid vaccine research 'was 97% publicly funded'**

At least 97% of the funding for the development of the Oxford/AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine has been identified as coming from taxpayers or charitable trusts, according to the first attempt to reconstruct who paid for the decades of research that led to the lifesaving formulation. Using two different methods of inquiry, researchers were able to identify the source of hundreds of millions of pounds of research grants from the year 2000 onwards for published work on what would eventually become the novel technology that underpins the jab, as well as funding for the final product. The overwhelming majority of the money, especially in the early stages of the research, came from UK government departments, British and American scientific institutes, the European commission and charities including the Wellcome Trust.

<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2021/apr/15/oxfordastrazeneca-covid-vaccine-research-was-97-publicly-funded>

### **Make coronavirus vaccines patent-free, former world leaders urge Biden**

President Joe Biden is being urged to suspend patents for coronavirus vaccines. The move would allow developing countries to produce the vaccines on their own. The request came in a letter signed by over 100 Nobel laureates and 75 former world leaders.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/former-world-leaders-urge-biden-suspend-covid-19-vaccine-patents-2021-4>

### **Belgium won't administer Johnson & Johnson coronavirus vaccines yet**

The first Johnson & Johnson coronavirus vaccines will not yet be used in Belgium in the coming days, said Federal Public Health Minister Frank Vandenbroucke at the end of Wednesday's Consultative Committee. The pharmaceutical company recommended that countries that have already received deliveries of the coronavirus vaccine not use the doses until the European Medicines Agency (EMA) has made a decision on its safety.

<https://www.brusselstimes.com/news/belgium-all-news/health/165054/belgium-wont-administer-johnson-johnson-coronavirus-vaccines-yet-frank-vandenbroucke-health-minister-janssen-consultative-committee-united-states-ema/>

### **Portugal extends COVID-19 emergency until end of April**

Portugal's parliament extended on Wednesday a state of emergency for 15 days as health experts warned that a gradual relaxation of strict lockdown rules now underway could soon lead to a significant jump in coronavirus cases. The state of emergency grants the government powers to take emergency measures such as imposing a nighttime curfew if deemed necessary, though the general trend is currently to ease a lockdown imposed in January to curb what was then the world's worst

COVID-19 surge. Portugal started lifting restrictions last month and has since reopened some schools, restaurant and cafe terraces, museums and hair salons.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-portugal/portugal-extends-covid-19-emergency-until-end-of-april-idU5L8N2M73GI>

### **In fight against COVID-19, Portugal continues to cautiously ease lockdown**

Most Portuguese regions will enter the third phase of easing the COVID-19 lockdown next week, but stricter rules will stay in place in municipalities where transmission rates remain high, Prime Minister Antonio Costa said on Thursday. "These set of measures are neither prizes nor punishments," Antonio Costa told a news conference. "They are public health measures for the safety of the population, of people." Portugal, which imposed a lockdown in January to curb what was then the world's worst COVID-19 surge, started lifting restrictions last month and has since reopened some schools, restaurant and cafe terraces, museums and hair salons.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/fight-against-covid-19-portugal-continues-cautiously-ease-lockdown-2021-04-15/>

### **Global officials urge rich countries to donate COVID jabs now**

Top officials from the United Nations, the World Bank and the Gavi Vaccine Alliance have urged rich countries to donate excess COVID-19 vaccine doses to an international effort to supply low- and middle-income countries. At Thursday's virtual event hosted by Gavi to boost support for the COVAX equitable vaccine sharing initiative, the officials also appealed for another \$2bn by June for the programme, which is aiming to buy up to 1.8 billion doses in 2021.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/15/global-officials-urge-rich-countries-to-donate-coronavirus-jabs>

### **Iran to purchase 60 million COVID-19 vaccines from Russia**

Iran has finalized a deal with Russia to purchase 60 million doses of Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine, the state-run IRNA news agency reported Thursday. The report quotes Iran's ambassador to Russia, Kazem Jalali, as saying the contract has been "signed and finalized" for enough vaccinations to inoculate 30 million people. Jalali said Iran will receive the vaccines by the end of the year. On Saturday, Iran began a 10-day lockdown amid a fourth wave of coronavirus infections. Authorities ordered most shops closed and offices restricted to one-third capacity in cities declared as "red zones" with the highest infection rates.

<https://apnews.com/article/world-news-iran-coronavirus-pandemic-russia-a621235653a9a2fa2b7a8584fbb575a5>

### **Colombia rules out prompt opening of Venezuela border on COVID concerns**

Colombian President Ivan Duque on Thursday ruled out a prompt reopening of his country's border with Venezuela, citing a high-level of COVID-19 infections. The 2,219km (1,380-mile) land and water border between the two neighbors - who do not maintain diplomatic relations - has been closed since last year. A new reopening date of June 1 was set by Bogota earlier this year. "I know all the urgency there is for the issue of opening the border," Duque said during a visit to the border province of Norte de Santander. But Colombia had to be "especially cautious" given the uncertainty over the COVID-19 situation in Venezuela, he said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/colombia-rules-out-prompt-opening-venezuela-border-covid-concerns-2021-04-15/>

## **Maintaining Services**

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### **Hospitals run short of beds as Asia's COVID-19 cases surge**

India and Thailand reported record daily coronavirus cases on Thursday, as a new wave of infections, combined with a shortage of hospital beds and vaccines, threatens to slow Asia's recovery from the pandemic. India breached 200,000 daily infections for the first time on Thursday and the financial hub of Mumbai entered a lockdown, as many hospitals reported shortages of beds

and oxygen supplies. "The situation is horrible. We are a 900-bed hospital, but there are about 60 patients waiting and we don't have space for them," said Avinash Gawande, an official at the Government Medical College and Hospital in Nagpur, a commercial hub in Maharashtra.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus/hospitals-run-short-of-beds-as-asias-covid-19-cases-surge-idUSKBN2C213T>

### **Shortage of intubation drugs threatens Brazil health sector**

Reports are emerging of Brazilian health workers forced to intubate patients without the aid of sedatives, after weeks of warnings that hospitals and state governments risked running out of critical medicines. One doctor at the Albert Schweitzer municipal hospital in Rio de Janeiro told the Associated Press that for days health workers diluted sedatives to make their stock last longer. Once it ran out, nurses and doctors had to begin using neuromuscular blockers and tying patients to their beds, the doctor said. "You relax the muscles and do the procedure easily, but we don't have sedation," said the doctor, who agreed to discuss the sensitive situation only if not quoted by name. "Some try to talk, resist. They're conscious."

<https://apnews.com/article/brazil-rio-de-janeiro-health-coronavirus-pandemic-latin-america-2890dfce359633ee7b049944b66070ab>

### **Patchy deliveries, limited access disrupt jab drive across Africa**

Many people in African countries who have received their first shot of a COVID-19 vaccine do not know when they will get the second one due to delivery delays, according to the continent's top public health official. "We cannot predict when the second doses will come and that is not good for our vaccination programme," John Nkengasong, the head of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), told reporters on Thursday. Africa lags behind most other regions in COVID-19 vaccinations, with just under 14 million doses of mostly AstraZeneca vaccines having been administered on the continent of 1.3 billion.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/15/patchy-deliveries-disrupt-africas-coronavirus-vaccination-cdc>

### **Brazil in talks to import emergency COVID-19 medications amid shortages**

Brazil is negotiating with other countries, including Spain, to receive emergency medications needed for intubated COVID-19 patients, Health Minister Marcelo Queiroga said on Thursday. Brazilian hospitals are running low on sedatives, and reports have emerged this week of the seriously ill being tied down and intubated without effective sedatives.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/brazil-talks-import-emergency-covid-19-medications-amid-shortages-2021-04-15/>

## **Healthcare Innovations**

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### **Mixing Covid vaccines could mean booster jab is not needed, says professor**

Mixing vaccines may give such strong protection against Covid-19 — including variants — that a booster jab is not needed in the autumn, a leading medical expert said today. Sir John Bell, Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford University and a member of the UK's Vaccine Taskforce, stressed that research being led by his colleague Professor Matthew Snape may deliver another breakthrough in the battle against coronavirus. "The work that Matthew Snape and others are doing in this study to look at comparisons may give us a mix that actually gives us some better immune response that means we are better able to deal with the South Africa variant, the Brazilian variant, and dozens of other variants that are now popping up all over the world," he told Sky News.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/mix-and-match-covid-vaccine-variant-booster-jab-john-bell-b929822.html>

### **EMA starts review of GSK's monoclonal antibody to treat COVID-19 patients**

The European Medicines Agency said on Thursday it is reviewing available data on the use of GlaxoSmithKline's monoclonal antibody to treat COVID-19 patients. The agency said its review of

VIR-7831, which GSK is developing with Vir Biotechnology Inc, will include data from a study comparing its effect with that of a placebo in patients with mild to moderate COVID-19 who were at high risk of progressing to a more severe condition. While a more comprehensive rolling review is expected to start at a later time, the agency said the current review will provide European Union-wide recommendations for national authorities who may take decisions on early use of the medicine. The companies reported in March that VIR-7831 reduced the risk of hospitalisation and deaths among patients by 85%, based on interim data from a study.

<https://news.yahoo.com/ema-starts-review-gsk-monoclonal-130407618.html>

### **Severe Covid-19 risk with asthma and COPD lower than previously thought**

The risk for people with asthma and other chronic respiratory diseases of severe Covid-19 is not as high as had been feared at the start of the pandemic, say researchers from the University of Oxford. Analysis of records from 8 million patients at 1,205 general practices in England found people with active asthma and severe asthma had 26% and 29% higher relative risks of hospital admission with Covid-19 and around 30% higher relative risk of admission to intensive care compared with matched patients with no underlying respiratory disease. However, this is lower than suggested by data collected between January and April 2020, which showed that COPD was associated with a 50% increased risk of hospitalisation and 54% increased risk of death from Covid-19. Furthermore, there was no evidence that asthma was associated with an increased absolute risk of death from Covid-19, and the risks appeared similar for all ethnicities, the researchers reported in *The Lancet Respiratory Medicine*.

<https://www.pulsetoday.co.uk/news/clinical-areas/respiratory/severe-covid-19-risk-with-asthma-and-copd-lower-than-previously-thought/>

### **Covid-19: Single dose of Pfizer or AstraZeneca vaccine produces strong antibody response in over 80s**

A single dose of the Pfizer or Oxford-AstraZeneca covid-19 vaccine produces equivalent antibody responses five weeks after vaccination, a small study looking at people over 80 has found. The study, led by University of Birmingham researchers and made available through a preprint, found that antibodies specific to the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein were present in most people in both groups—93% after the Pfizer vaccine and 87% after the AstraZeneca vaccine. Researchers have said that these findings are “reassuring” for countries that decided to delay second doses in favour of vaccinating more people with a first dose. In the UK, people over 80 were in the first priority group for vaccination and received either the Pfizer or AstraZeneca vaccine. At the end of December 2020, the UK chief medical officers announced that the second doses of the covid vaccines should be given towards the end of 12 weeks rather than after the previously recommended 3-4 weeks. The research team collected blood samples from 165 people aged 80 to 99 years and living independently 5-6 weeks after their first vaccine dose. Of these, 76 received the Pfizer vaccine and 89 received the AstraZeneca vaccine. They then used a range of assays to measure the immune response generated. A small number of people (eight) had signs of previous natural covid-19 infection. Compared with those without previous infection, their antibody and T cell responses after the first vaccine dose were significantly higher (691-fold and fourfold, respectively). The study also found stronger T cell responses in people who had received the AstraZeneca vaccine, with 31% of this group producing detectable T cell responses compared with 12% of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine group.

<https://www.bmj.com/content/373/bmj.n979>

### **UK scientists find higher risk of brain clots from COVID-19 compared with vaccines**

There is a much higher risk of brain blood clots from COVID-19 infection than there is from vaccines against the disease, British researchers said on Thursday, after the rollout of inoculations was disrupted by reports of rare clots. AstraZeneca (AZN.L) and Johnson & Johnson (JNJ.N) have both

seen very rare reports of cerebral venous sinus thrombosis (CVST) linked to their vaccines. On Wednesday, the United States paused vaccinations using J&J's shot while a link with clots was investigated, with Denmark ditching AstraZeneca's shot over the issue. British and European regulators have stressed that the benefits of vaccination outweigh the risks. A study of 500,000 COVID-19 patients found CVST had occurred at a rate of 39 people out of a million following infection, researchers said. That compares with European Medicines Agency (EMA) figures showing that 5 in a million people reported CVST after getting AstraZeneca's shot.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-scientists-find-higher-risk-brain-clots-covid-19-compared-with-vaccines-2021-04-15/>