

Connecting Communities for COVID19 News

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Isolation Tips

'It could result in a pandemic of loneliness': Peers report on how digital Covid lives altered wellbeing

Despite the obvious perks that the online world brought when our world changed overnight, there are long-term implications of moving to a digitised world - especially when many are still lacking basic access to the internet and thus risk being further shut out down the line. To presume that technology is universally the great leveller is a mistake. The House of Lords today publishes a report, "Beyond Digital: Planning for a Hybrid World", looking at our digital futures. The report highlights the risk that this could have in developing a "pandemic of loneliness". This is already well reported. According to a survey of UK adults by the Mental Health Foundation, which took place nine months into Covid-19 restrictions in late November, one in four (24 per cent) said they had feelings of loneliness in the "previous two weeks". Figures from ONS suggested that in the first lockdown about 2.6 million adults felt lonely "often" or "always".

<https://www.independent.co.uk/independentpremium/lifestyle/loneliness-coronavirus-lockdown-digital-b1833893.html>

Hygiene Helpers

COVID-19: Regular exercise may cut COVID-19 death risk by a third, major study finds

Regular exercise reduces the chances of dying from infectious diseases such as COVID-19 by more than a third and makes people 31% less likely to catch the virus, a major study has found. The world's first study into the link between exercise and COVID-19 immunity suggested people need to be doing 30 minutes a day, five days a week, or 150 minutes a week of exercise that gets them at least slightly out of breath. Recommended activities include walking, running, cycling and strengthening exercises.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-regular-exercise-may-cut-covid-19-death-risk-by-a-third-major-study-finds-12281648>

Virginia's emergency alert on coronavirus vaccine availability startles some

Virginia officials startled some residents Monday by using the wireless emergency alert system to send out notice that coronavirus vaccines are now available to everyone over age 16. The buzzing cellphone messages led some residents to fear the worst. Complaints on Twitter ranged from "terrified there was an active shooter in my area" to "I thought it was time for a tornado" to "I thought Nukes were incoming or something" to "Thank you Commonwealth of Virginia for waking me up from my nap." Alena Yarmosky, a spokeswoman for Gov. Ralph Northam (D), said her office had seen some criticism but felt that the response was generally positive

https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/coronavirus-dc-virginia-maryland/2021/04/20/6937167e-a204-11eb-a7ee-949c574a09ac_story.html

Govt in talks with mainland authorities to use coronavirus vaccine records for travel

Hong Kong's health chief Sophia Chan Siu-chee said the Hong Kong government is in talks with authorities in Guangdong over the mutual recognition of the vaccination records, to hopefully resume cross border travel in the near future. In response to written questions raised by lawmakers, the health secretary said both administrations have already started looking into how the vaccination records can be mutually recognized by linking up the digital vaccination record platforms. Chan said members of the public will be given a paper vaccination record card after getting the jab, or they

can also download the government "iAM Smart" app to get a digital vaccination record. "Both records will contain a QR code for easy access of information, authorities will make use of this feature, providing a foundation for cross-border travels in the future," she added.

<https://www.thestandard.com.hk/breaking-news/section/4/170224/Govt-in-talks-with-mainland-authorities-to-use-coronavirus-vaccine-records-for-travel>

Singapore's swift COVID vaccinations start with 5-minute bookings

As a small but wealthy city-state with advanced medical infrastructure, Singapore was always well-positioned to quickly vaccinate its population against COVID-19. So far, it is pulling it off -- largely thanks to effective use of digital technology. Singapore has jumped ahead of its neighbors in terms of the proportion of the population inoculated. The latest figures from Sunday show over 23% of residents -- or roughly 1.3 million people -- had received at least one vaccine dose, according to the statistics website Our World in Data. That was the highest ratio in Asia excluding even tinier Bhutan, which has rapidly proceeded with shots acquired from India for free.

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Coronavirus/COVID-vaccines/Singapore-s-swift-COVID-vaccinations-start-with-5-minute-bookings>

Vaccines alone will not stop Covid spreading - here's why

Many of us are hoping vaccines against coronavirus will be our route out of lockdown, enabling us to reclaim our old lives. But scientists say jabs alone will not currently be enough and other measures are still needed. The "Swiss cheese respiratory pandemic defence model" was first created by Ian M Mackay, a virologist at the University of Queensland, Australia. The infographic has been translated into more than two dozen languages. It is based on a concept originated by James T Reason, a cognitive psychologist, now a professor emeritus at the University of Manchester, UK. It is used in scientific circles when discussing mitigating risk.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-40ac92b1-1750-4e86-9936-2cda6b0acb3f?xtor=ES-211-%5b43445_PANUK_DIV_15_NCA_riverpollution_RET_DEF%5d-20210415-%5bbbcnews_whythevaccinealnewontridusofcovid_news coronavirus%5d

Community Activities

Community pharmacy teams to offer free Covid-19 test kits

Community pharmacy teams across Ely and East Cambridgeshire have started to offer free Covid-19 test kits. The 'pharmacy collect' service will make lateral flow devices available to people without symptoms free of charge from local NHS pharmacies. It comes after NHS Test and Trace research found that people prefer to access testing close to home. Anil Sharma, pharmacist at Haddenham Pharmacy, said: "There is so much that pharmacists and their teams can do to help our communities as Covid-19 restrictions are eased."

<https://www.elystandard.co.uk/news/ely-pharmacy-collect-covid-tests-service-7914490>

Twitter becomes platform of hope amid the despair of India's COVID crisis

After spending hours fruitlessly calling government helplines in a search for a hospital bed for a critically ill COVID-19 patient, Indian lawyer Jeevika Shiv posted an SOS request on Twitter. "Serious #covid19 patient in #Delhi with oxygen level 62 needs immediate hospital bed," Shiv, part of a 350-member COVID-19 volunteer Medical Support Group, said on Twitter late last week. Help came quickly. The patient found a bed and was soon showing signs of recovery. "Finally, it was help online that worked as people responded with information," Shiv said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/twitter-becomes-platform-hope-amid-despair-indias-covid-crisis-2021-04-21/>

Most Americans say they should be vaccinated before the U.S. donates Covid-19 shots elsewhere

Three-quarters of Americans believe the U.S. government should start donating Covid-19 vaccines to

other countries, but only after every person in the U.S. who wants a vaccine has received one, according to a new survey from STAT and The Harris Poll. At the same time, just over half of Americans said they agree with the idea that the Biden administration should immediately start donating vaccines to other countries in order to achieve global herd immunity, which reflects growing concern that the coronavirus cannot be contained until most of the world is vaccinated. “The data says that most everybody is on the same page — Americans clearly prioritize ensuring they get vaccinated as a top priority,” said Rob Jekielek, managing director at The Harris Poll, which queried 1,963 people between April 9 and 11. “But you also have a really good chunk of the population who also believes we need to put a global lens on the issue.”

<https://www.statnews.com/pharmalot/2021/04/21/covid19-vaccines-global-donations-america/>

Social Media Influencers Are Spreading Wild Rumors About COVID-19 Vaccines and Periods

A few media outlets have written about vaccines and menstruation—back in February, it was in the news in Israel, where the vaccine rollout is further along. In the United States, there has been a flurry of coverage over the last few weeks, first in smaller outlets like The Lily and a few days ago in the New York Times. A few weeks ago, Dr. Kathryn Clancy, a professor of anthropology at the University of Illinois, tweeted about her own post-vaccine menstrual irregularity. She heard from so many people with similar experiences that she and a colleague decided to run a survey to collect data on post-vaccination cycle changes. It has received more than 19,000 responses since it launched in early April. Over the last few days, social media accounts from those opposed to vaccines have begun to promote the outlandish idea that simply being around people who have been vaccinated causes menstrual issues and even miscarriage.

https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2021/04/social-media-influencers-are-spreading-wild-rumors-about-covid-19-vaccines-and-periods/?utm_source=twitter&utm_campaign=naytev&utm_medium=social

New Mexico prepares to fight vaccine hesitancy in some areas

New Mexico health officials said Wednesday they are preparing to respond to pockets of COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy in some communities at the same time that overall interest in getting vaccinated increases. Health Secretary Tracie Collins said the state is exploring recruiting “community champions” — trusted residents of regions with vaccine hesitancy who can address concerns about safety and effectiveness. Town halls also are a possibility to vet concerns and possible misinformation. And video testimonials about coronavirus vaccines already have been recorded. “We’ve got a lot of work we’re going to be doing these next few weeks to really get ahead of this vaccine hesitancy,” Collins said. She said precise statistics showing the vaccine hesitancy trends are not yet ready to be released. Medical providers also have a crucial role in listening and addressing people’s fears, Human Services Secretary David Scrase said in a virtual news conference.

<https://apnews.com/article/nm-state-wire-health-new-mexico-government-and-politics-coronavirus-26ddba45e77f86af19139b8e3befaefb>

Working Remotely

Maintaining team productivity when remote working is no longer a novelty

Workplaces across New Zealand and around the globe are continuing to embrace the changes that were initially influenced by local lockdown scenarios – with flexible and remote work practices being the clear winner. A new McKinsey Institute report highlights that up to a quarter of workers may now permanently work from home at least three days a week, however, when the novelty of working from home has worn off, and it becomes a part of everyday working life, maintaining productivity in this setting for the long haul can have its own challenges. Here’s a few tips that might help boost both performance and morale amongst remote workforces.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/prosper/advice/300277320/maintaining-team-productivity-when-remote-working-is-n>

[o-longer-a-novelty](#)

Midsized US cities need to learn to woo remote workers post-pandemic

In less than a few weeks, the US will begin a post-pandemic era as vaccinations begin to confer a high degree of immunity to a majority of Americans. One of the lasting effects will be a result of the involuntary experiment of working remotely. The pandemic was a technological accelerant that forced the workforce and companies to adapt to work outside the office and in many cases far away. More than 33% of the US workforce continues to log onto VPNs and video calls from home. After the pandemic Upwork predicts tens of millions of workers will continue to work remotely, and Americans will continue to relocate to small and midsized US cities, reshaping these regions. For many of these urban and rural areas, welcoming this new type of resident is an opportunity for economic development and population regrowth.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/cities-woo-remote-workers-future-of-work-coffee-shops-coworking-2021-4>

Will working from home last forever? Not for law, finance, and other industries.

As the return to the office picks up, the extent to which American office workers are allowed to continue working from home — which the vast majority of them have done during the pandemic — stands to affect everything from their satisfaction at work to where they are able to live. This summer, offices are generally opening on an optional basis and will open with more expectations for workers to be present this fall. The most flexibility will go to knowledge workers. These high-skilled workers, whose jobs are mediated by computers, will be much more likely than before the pandemic to be allowed to work from home at least some of the time in what's called the hybrid work model. But everything from which employees can work from home to the number of days they can do so will depend on a number of factors, including their job, company, and industry.

<https://www.vox.com/recode/22387529/working-from-home-return-to-office-remote-work>

Virtual Classrooms

5 TikTok Teachers Share Behind the Scenes of Virtual Teaching

In a matter of just a few years, TikTok has forged itself a spot at the front of the pack in regards to social media platforms. People from all over the world and all walks of life have begun turning their lives into clips lasting under one minute for viewers to see. Teachers—many of whom have had their work turned upside down amid the pandemic—have used the app to show what goes on behind the scenes of virtual teaching. From a kindergarten teacher who wanted to give more representation to Black, male educators to a fifth-grade teaching assistant who wants to show the resilience of his students, these five teachers will warm your heart and give you something to laugh at.

<https://www.newsweek.com/5-tiktok-teachers-share-behind-scenes-virtual-teaching-1585521>

Will Fall 2021 On Campus Look A Lot Like Fall 2019?

We have reached the critical moment when organizations of all types and sizes are putting the finishing touches on Plan A (and B and C) for fall 2021. The stakes are different, however, for a university. It is a cliché that the pandemic accelerated trends that were simmering all along. That is certainly true in higher education, where the public health emergency collided with deeply held assumptions about the irreplaceable value of the in-person experience. And then Zoom ate the classroom. After decades of sputtering adoption, during which asynchronous online learning was marginalized at the edges of higher education, real-time video filled the void left by the virus. Now that vaccines are more widely available, we can plan for a future after lockdowns. This should begin with an honest evaluation of what we gained, and what we lost, during this forced year of virtual learning.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/annkirschner/2021/04/21/will-fall-2021-on-campus-look-a-lot-like-fall-2019/>

Public Policies

China - How a WHO push for global vaccines needled Europe

Last April, at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen added Europe to a global effort to ensure equitable access to a vaccine, which she said would be deployed “to every single corner of the world.” But despite pledging billions of dollars for the scheme set up by the World Health Organization (WHO) and publicly endorsing it, European Union officials and member states repeatedly made choices that undermined the campaign, internal documents seen by Reuters and interviews with EU officials and diplomats show. A year after its launch, Europe and the rest of the world have yet to donate a single dose through the vaccine scheme, which is part of an unprecedented effort to distribute vaccines, tests and drugs to fight the pandemic.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/how-who-push-global-vaccines-needed-europe-2021-04-21/>

Vaccine patent gives US government 'leverage' over manufacturers

The US government can use its ownership of a crucial vaccine patent to push companies to share their expertise with other manufacturers and boost global access to coronavirus jabs, according to a top scientific official. Barney Graham, one of the US National Institutes of Health scientists who invented a key piece of technology used in the Moderna and BioNTech/Pfizer jabs, told the Financial Times the government’s patent gave Washington “leverage” over manufacturers. “Virtually everything that comes out of the government’s research labs is a non-exclusive licensing agreement so that it doesn’t get blocked by any particular company,” said Graham, who plans to retire from the US government this year. “That’s one of the reasons [I joined the NIH]: it’s to be able to use the leverage of the public funding to solve public health issues.”

<https://www.ft.com/content/d0c70cc2-0ffa-42dd-b0d0-0f76eeb273f0>

COVAX Obstacles and Shortages Threaten Africa's Coronavirus Vaccine Rollout

Africa has lagged behind in the race to acquire coronavirus vaccines since it began. It was clear individual governments would not be able to compete against wealthier nations purchasing limited stocks, so a collective effort quickly got underway. When the first doses arrived in Ghana, the Ivory Coast, Kenya, and Rwanda in late February and early March, it seemed like the continent’s rollout had finally gotten off the ground. However, efforts are stumbling in the face of systemic obstacles to distribution. Now, India’s surging third wave could also directly affect the continent’s access to vaccines. Africa has gotten most of its vaccine doses through the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) initiative, backed by the World Health Organization, the European Commission, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, which pools donor funding to allow developing countries to acquire shots—primarily AstraZeneca, which doesn’t require below-freezing storage. COVAX now needs an additional \$2 billion to continue its work.

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/04/21/covax-africa-vaccine-rollout-coronavirus-pandemic/>

Madhya Pradesh announces free COVID-19 vaccine for all adults

The Madhya Pradesh government on Wednesday announced that all people above the age of 18 years will be offered COVID-19 vaccine free of cost in the state from May 1. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan made the announcement in Bhopal. The chief minister said if COVID-19 is to be curbed, then the chain of its infection must be broken and for this, people need to stay indoors and avoid unnecessary travel.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/madhya-pradesh-announces-free-covid-19-vaccine-for-all-adults/articleshow/82181539.cms>

Lao capital enters 14-day lockdown amid COVID-19 cases surge

Lao Prime Minister Phankham Viphavanh on Wednesday has ordered a 14-day lockdown for the capital of Vientiane in the wake of a surge of COVID-19 cases, while other provinces are urged to consider intensifying prevention measures. The Lao Ministry of Health on Wednesday announced 26

new cases of COVID-19 in Vientiane, following an outbreak believed to have begun during the Lao New Year holiday period. According to a notice published by the PM on Wednesday, which will be effective from Thursday to May 5, Lao authorities at every level must continue educating the public about the dangers posed by COVID-19, as well as ways to protect themselves and their families. People working at government offices in Vientiane are to reduce the number of workers to ensure social distancing, except for essential personnel such as soldiers and police officers. The same applies to private sector businesses.

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/asiapacific/2021-04/21/c_139896686.htm

India PM Modi urges state governments to use lockdown as last resort to contain virus

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged state governments on Tuesday to use lockdowns as the last resort to contain the spread of the second wave of COVID-19 infections, even as cases and deaths surge to record highs. Modi also asked citizens to stay indoors, not spread panic about the virus and form local groups to ensure adherence to COVID-19 protocols. He said the central government is working with states and private companies to ramp up the supply of oxygen, as well as production and distribution of vaccines.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/healthcoronavirus-india-modi/india-pm-modi-urges-state-governments-to-use-lockdown-as-last-resort-to-contain-virus-idUSL4N2MD3RF>

Latin American leaders seek more vaccines at Andorra summit

With eyes set on expanding access to coronavirus vaccines and economic recovery, representatives of 22 countries from Latin America and Europe's Iberian Peninsula are meeting — mostly virtually — in the tiny mountainous nation of Andorra for the first time since the pandemic started. Latin America has suffered from the pandemic in a disproportionate way: its 640 million inhabitants are about 8% of the world's population, but the region accounts for nearly 30% of confirmed global COVID-19 deaths. The Iberoamerican Summit, which normally takes place every two years, wants to address that, with a final summit declaration expected to include a renewed call for universal and equitable access to vaccines.

<https://apnews.com/article/latin-america-health-business-andorra-summits-8af73ef2fddb9c06e8b067115214eb59>

German lawmakers approve 'emergency brake' virus rules

German lawmakers on Wednesday approved a proposal by Chancellor Angela Merkel's government to mandate uniform restrictions in areas where the coronavirus is spreading too quickly, among them closures and a nighttime curfew. As parliament's lower house debated the plan, thousands of protesters gathered on a nearby street. Police broke up the demonstration with pepper spray and made dozens of arrests after participants ignored coronavirus restrictions and tossed bottles at officers. The legislation to apply an "emergency brake" consistently in areas with high infection rates is intended to end the patchwork of measures that has often characterized the pandemic response across highly decentralized Germany's 16 states.

<https://apnews.com/article/health-business-government-and-politics-europe-coronavirus-ce9e12ee389837fdbecb60b950001624>

MSF urges rich countries to back COVID vaccine patent waiver

International medical charity Doctors Without Borders (Medecins Sans Frontieres, or MSF) has urged rich countries to stop blocking a patent waiver plan that could boost the global production of coronavirus vaccines. Members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) will meet virtually for informal talks on Thursday to discuss a proposal to waive intellectual property rights for producing COVID-19 vaccines and other coronavirus-related medical tools for the duration of the pandemic. Sponsors of the waiver argue that the temporary suspension would allow more factories worldwide to produce jabs without breaking international rules under the WTO agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). But the proposal, originally submitted in October by

India and South Africa, has met staunch opposition from several high-income members, many of which are home to major drug-makers – such as the United States and members of the European Union.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/21/wto-to-hold-meeting-on-waving-property-rights-on-covid-vaccines>

France to impose entry restrictions on travelers from India

A government official says France is about to impose new entry restrictions on travelers from India, in order to fight a contagious coronavirus variant spreading in that country

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/france-impose-entry-restrictions-travelers-india-77216124>

Maintaining Services

EU countries ready to start using J&J shot as deliveries resume

European countries prepared on Wednesday to start using Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine and speed up their vaccination campaigns after Europe's drug regulator backed the shot and deliveries started trickling in after a week-long pause. Germany's health ministry said it would start deliveries to federal states for use in vaccination centres shortly, and that family doctors should resume the use of the vaccine as of Wednesday, while France will receive the vaccine from week after next. The Netherlands planned to start using it next week.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/germany-distribute-jj-covid-vaccine-federal-states-2021-04-21/>

How South Korea turbocharged specialty syringe production for COVID-19 vaccines

Under fire in local media for not doing enough to secure COVID-19 vaccines, South Korea's government had been reviewing options to accelerate shipments and gain more supply. Engineering a jump in LDS syringe output was an opportunity to be seized, it concluded. The niche products were suddenly in huge demand globally after it became apparent they could be used to squeeze out a sixth dose from vials of Pfizer Inc (PFE.N) and BioNTech's (22UAY.DE) newly approved COVID-19 vaccine compared to five doses with a standard syringe. "It had come to our attention that Pfizer was looking for LDS syringes...using LDS syringes automatically boosts vaccine volume by 20%," Park told Reuters.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/how-south-korea-turbocharged-specialty-syringe-production-covid-19-vaccines-2021-04-21/>

Pregnant women may get Covid-19 vaccine priority to prevent complications

Experts are considering whether pregnant women should be prioritised for Covid-19 vaccines to avoid complications before they give birth. Three pregnant women were treated in intensive care in recent weeks after becoming unwell with the virus. Karina Butler, chairwoman of the National Immunisation Advisory Committee (Niac), said yesterday: "It's not so much that they require a specific prioritisation as such, but if pregnancy is time limited it may be a thing that they may need to be facilitated in some way." She said that vaccinating women before they gave birth was "under active review at the moment" and that a recommendation would be coming shortly.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/pregnant-women-may-get-covid-19-vaccine-priority-to-prevent-complications-ftmcw0qc>

Pfizer and Moderna vaccines could be produced in Melbourne as government announces \$50m funding

Coronavirus vaccines like Pfizer and Moderna could be produced in Australia for the first time as the Victorian Government invests \$50 million into the domestic manufacturing of mRNA vaccine technology. The state government will work closely with the Commonwealth and world-leading experts to develop the first mRNA manufacturing facility in the Southern Hemisphere, which would be based in Melbourne. In a statement, the government said mRNA vaccines, such as Pfizer and Moderna, were a "promising alternative" to traditional vaccines because of their high efficacy,

capacity for rapid development, low-cost manufacture and safe administration.

<https://www.9news.com.au/national/coronavirus-vaccine-australia-pfizer-moderna-could-be-produced-in-melbourne/181532cf-aae0-46d1-a587-059c93fcc479>

Oxygen supply disruption kills 22 COVID-19 patients in India

Twenty-two COVID-19 patients on ventilators died in a hospital in western India on Wednesday when their oxygen supply was interrupted by a leak in a supply line, officials said. Suraj Mandhar, the district collector, said the supply of oxygen has since resumed to other patients. Fire officer Sanjay Bairagi said the leak was halted by the fire service within 15 minutes, but there was supply disruption in the Zakir Hussain Hospital in Nashik, a city in Maharashtra state that is the worst hit by the latest surge in coronavirus cases in the country.

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/disruption-oxygen-supply-kills-22-indian-hospital-77210246>

Treating COVID-19 at home could soon be a reality in the U.K. as government steps up efforts

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Tuesday that he is launching a new antivirals task force that will “supercharge” the search for at-home treatments designed to “stop COVID-19 in its tracks” and speed up recovery time. It is hoped at least two effective treatments, either in a tablet or capsule form, will be made available for people who have tested for positive for COVID-19, or have been exposed to someone with the coronavirus that causes COVID-19, later this year.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/treating-covid-19-at-home-could-soon-be-a-reality-in-the-uk-as-government-steps-up-efforts/ar-BB1fSVdr>

Syria’s Idlib region to receive first batch of COVID-19 vaccines

A first batch of COVID-19 vaccine doses was expected to arrive on Wednesday in war-torn northwestern Syria, where millions of people live in dire humanitarian conditions, a United Nations official said. The 53,800 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine were dispatched to the rebel-dominated region as part of the Covax facility, which ensures the world’s poorest economies get access to jabs for free. The delivery will be the first to Syria as part of the Covax programme, which has already sent vaccine doses to more than 100 different territories worldwide.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/21/syrias-idlib-region-to-receive-first-batch-of-covid-19-vaccines>

Pfizer Identifies Fake Covid-19 Shots Abroad as Criminals Exploit Vaccine Demand

Pfizer says it has identified in Mexico and Poland the first confirmed instances of counterfeit versions of the Covid-19 vaccine it developed with BioNTech SE, the latest attempt by criminals trying to exploit the world-wide vaccination campaign. Vials seized by authorities in separate investigations were tested by the company and confirmed to contain bogus vaccine. The vials recovered in Mexico also had fraudulent labeling, while a substance inside vials in Poland was likely an antiwrinkle treatment, Pfizer said. About 80 people at a clinic in Mexico received a fake vaccine going for about \$1,000 a dose, though they don’t appear to have been physically harmed. The vials, found in beach-style beer coolers, had different lot numbers than those sent to the state, and a wrong expiration date, said Dr. Manuel de la O Cavazos, the health secretary of Nuevo León state.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/pfizer-identifies-fake-covid-19-shots-abroad-as-criminals-exploit-vaccine-demand-11619006403>

Healthcare Innovations

Roche looking for new place to test COVID-19 pill after cases plummet in UK

Roche (ROG.S) is looking for another location to carry out trials of its pill to fight COVID-19, after plummeting case numbers in Britain made it difficult to find enough patients for its study there, the Swiss drugmaker said on Wednesday. Roche and Boston-based partner Atea Pharmaceuticals (AVIR.O) are hoping their AT-527 pill could offer an anti-viral therapy to treat COVID-19 patients that

would be easier to administer and cheaper than other prospective treatments, such as antibody cocktails or Gilead Science's (GILD.O) remdesivir. In an interview in Swiss media in early March, Roche Chairman Christoph Franz had offered the tantalizing prospect of data on AT-527 "within the next weeks", saying he dreamed of being able to fight the pandemic with a pill by year's end.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/roche-trial-covid-19-pill-delayed-uk-vaccine-rollout-intervened-2021-04-21/>

Link between cardiac arrests and COVID may help map the pandemic

A new study, published this month, collected data from 50 US cities as well as from major cities in the United Kingdom, France, Italy, New Zealand and Australia. The study showed that rises in out-of-hospital cardiac arrests were linked to rising COVID cases. The study was based on data provided by the Metropolitan EMS Medical Directors Global Alliance, a surveillance network of emergency medical services (EMS) staff who voluntarily share data. Dr Paul Pepe is global coordinator of the alliance and also a co-author of the study. He told Al Jazeera that normally a 10 percent increase in cardiac arrests would be a cause for concern. But during last spring in the US, two-thirds of US cities in the study saw increases between 20 and 50 percent. In cities particularly hit hard, the rate doubled

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2021/4/21/is-a-spike-in-cardiac-arrests-related-to-covid-19>

Racial minorities at higher risk for COVID-19 hospitalization, ICU care

Racial minority COVID-19 patients are at much higher risk for needing hospitalization and intensive care than their White counterparts, a new Kaiser Permanente Southern California (KPSC) study finds. The retrospective study, published yesterday in the Annals of Internal Medicine, involved comparing the electronic health records of 47,974 adult Hispanic, Black, Asian, Pacific Islander, and White COVID-19 patients from Mar 1 to Jul 31, 2020. The researchers saw disparities by race for all outcomes, even after adjustment for age, sex, underlying medical conditions, and body mass index (BMI). Racial minorities had a slightly higher chance than White patients of being tested for or diagnosed as having COVID-19 but were also at substantially higher risk for hospitalization and ICU care

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/04/racial-minorities-higher-risk-covid-19-hospitalization-icu-care>

'No one was listening': Long Covid patients struggle to get care for their symptoms

Thousands of people with long Covid have struggled to receive medical care for their symptoms. Many have found that even if they're able to see a doctor, it can be difficult to be heard, and the best treatments remain unclear. Medical centers across the country are opening clinics specifically for people with lingering Covid symptoms, aiming to harness the expertise of specialists ranging from pulmonologists to physical therapists to neurologists. But many long Covid sufferers are located far from such a clinic, and the waitlist to be seen often is long. For example, the Cleveland Clinic's post-Covid recovery center, reCOVER clinic, welcomed 113 patients in its first month, and as of mid-March, the clinic's next available appointments were at the end of July. Penn Medicine's Post-Covid Assessment and Recovery Clinic in Philadelphia has enrolled 458, with a three-month waitlist for new patients.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/04/21/long-covid-patients-struggle-to-get-care-for-their-symptoms/>

India's Covaxin shot 78% effective against coronavirus, say developers

India's only domestically developed COVID-19 vaccine, Covaxin, has been found to be 78% effective in a second analysis of clinical trials done around the country, its makers said on Wednesday. "I am very pleased to state that Covaxin ... has shown the efficacy of 78% in the second interim analysis," said Baram Bhargava, the chief of the state-run Indian Council of Medical Research that has created the vaccine with Bharat Biotech. The first analysis released in March had shown an efficacy rate of 81%.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/indias-covaxin-shot-78-effective-against-coronavirus-say-developers-2021-04-21/>

Blood Clotting Risk Higher for COVID-19, Than From Vaccines

Researchers at the University of Oxford in England reported that the risk of the rare blood clotting known as cerebral venous thrombosis (CVT) following COVID-19 infection is around 100 times greater than normal. And several times higher than it is post-vaccination or following influenza. The study authors, led by Professor Paul Harrison and Dr. Maxime Taquet, counted the number of CVT cases diagnosed in the two weeks following diagnosis of COVID-19 or after the first dose of a vaccine. They then compared these to calculated incidences of CVT following influenza infection and the background level in the general population. These researchers report that CVT is more common after COVID-19 than in any comparison groups, with 30% of these cases occurring in the under 40 population.

<https://www.precisionvaccinations.com/2021/04/20/blood-clotting-risk-higher-covid-19-vaccines>

First study into prevalence of COVID-19 symptoms amongst high-risk children

Children with weakened immune systems have not shown a higher risk of developing severe COVID-19 infection despite commonly displaying symptoms, a new study suggests. During a 16-week period which covered the first wave of the pandemic, researchers from the University of Southampton and University Hospital Southampton carried out an observational study of nearly 1500 immunocompromised children – defined as requiring annual influenza vaccinations due to underlying conditions or medication. The results, published in BMJ Open, showed that symptoms of COVID-19 infection were common in many of the children – with over two thirds of participants reporting at least one symptom and one third experiencing three or more symptoms simultaneously. One hundred and ten patients with symptoms undertook viral PCR tests, none of whom tested positive.

<https://www.miragenews.com/first-study-into-prevalence-of-covid-19-546491/>

Oral drug Molnupiravir effective against COVID-19 in hamsters: study

An orally administered antiviral drug initially developed to treat influenza can significantly decrease novel coronavirus levels in hamsters, holding out promise of a pill to combat COVID-19, say researchers. Scientists from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the U.S. and the University of Plymouth in the U.K. found that MK-4482, also called Molnupiravir, was effective when provided up to 12 hours before or 12 hours after infection with SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19. The drug can also decrease damage it causes to lungs, states the study conducted on hamsters.

<https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/oral-drug-molnupiravir-effective-against-covid-19-in-hamsters-study/article34365900.ece>