

Connecting Communities for COVID19 News

7th Jun 2021

Isolation Tips

The cure for pandemic loneliness? Friends of a different generation.

Research from Washington University in St. Louis and John Hopkins University School of Medicine shows that intergenerational volunteering is good for older people's mental health and physical functioning (including improved mobility, stamina, and flexibility). A meta-analysis of 16 studies, published by Mikaela B von Bonsdorff and Taina Rantanen in "Aging Clinical and Experimental Research," showed that volunteering in old age predicted better self-rated health, functioning, physical activity and life satisfaction, as well as decreased depression and mortality. The intergenerational friendship movement had been gaining momentum long before the pandemic. But one legacy of the pandemic could be creating more opportunities for young adults to bond with their elders, connections that could play an important role as we work to reimagine elder care in the United States

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2021/06/03/intergenerational-friendships-loneliness-pandemic/>

Coronavirus affecting mental health 'the norm,' research shows

Mild cases of Coronavirus can impact mental health just as much as severe cases, research by University College London (UCL) has found. Scientists analysed 215 studies from 30 countries, which found that 23 per cent of people who had contracted Covid-19 went through depression. Anxiety was also experienced by 16 per cent of patients.

<https://www.lbc.co.uk/news/coronavirus-affecting-mental-health-the-norm-research-shows/>

Hygiene Helpers

Bolton GPs offer second Covid jabs four weeks after first to use surplus

GPs in one of the UK's Covid hotspots are offering all adults their second dose of Covid vaccination four weeks after their first, in a rush to administer vaccines within their shelf life. Some GPs in Bolton have been sent so many doses of the Pfizer vaccine that they are offering second jabs a month earlier than government rules allow, concerned that otherwise they may be wasted. It is just the latest sign that local areas are increasingly flexing - if not ignoring - national guidance in order to vaccinate everyone they can without throwing any doses away.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jun/05/bolton-gps-offer-second-covid-jabs-four-weeks-after-first-to-use-surplus>

Coronavirus: Germany fights trade in fake Covid vaccine certificates

A German police force has set up a special team to combat a growing black market in forged vaccine certificates. Police in Cologne told the broadcaster ARD that fraudsters were communicating via an encrypted messenger service which makes investigations difficult.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-57344546>

Switzerland to launch Covid certificates from June 7

The cantons will start making available the first Covid certificates - on paper or in digital form - from next week. They should be available throughout Switzerland by the end of June, the Federal Council said in a statement External link on Friday. Canton Bern has been chosen as a first test canton. To receive the free certificate Swiss residents must go to a pharmacy, doctor's surgery, hospital or vaccination centre where staff can generate a digital QR code on a computer that confirms their

status – either vaccinated, recovered from the virus or having proof of a recent negative PCR test. The forgery-proof QR code containing this information and other relevant personal details is then either printed out or transferred to the Covid Certificate smartphone app, which can be downloaded at Google and Apple app stores. It will feature an electronic signature of the Confederation.

<https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/switzerland-to-launch-covid-certificates-from-june-7/46678022>

A safe return to U.S. schools seems closer with vaccines and testing improvements.

After a school year rife with debate over the safety of returning to classrooms, experts say that the United States is edging closer to a safe return to in-person learning in the fall. First, there is continuing good news on the vaccine front. Children ages 12 to 15 recently became eligible to get the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in the U.S. and in the European Union, and the vaccine was endorsed by Britain’s drug regulator on Friday to be used for the same age group. Moderna plans this month to ask the Food and Drug Administration to clear its vaccine for use in 12- to 17-year-olds. For more than a year, parents across the United States have scrambled to adapt to online learning and keep their children focused. (And parents who balanced remote learning with work were the lucky ones. Many others lost their jobs, lacked adequate internet access or stopped work to tend to their families.)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/04/us/covid-schools-in-person-learning.html>

Masks have stopped disease spread for centuries. Here’s why they may catch on in the U.S.

More than a year into a pandemic that has sickened tens of millions of people in the United States and killed more than 500,000, most people are eager to reclaim some semblance of their former lives. About half of the country has received at least one dose of coronavirus vaccines authorized for emergency use by the Food and Drug Administration. Infection rates are dropping. And federal health authorities have relaxed mask recommendations for people who are fully vaccinated against the virus. But it’s unclear what our new normal will look like and whether, at least in some form, it will include face coverings — which have been shown to not only help protect against the coronavirus, but also, with additional measures such as social-distancing, slow the spread of influenza and other respiratory diseases.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2021/06/03/coronavirus-pandemic-future-masks/>

Gavi welcomes U.S. allocation plan for vaccine dose-sharing – 19 million doses donated to COVAX in first tranche

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, welcomes the announcement by the United States Government of its strategy for global vaccine sharing, which sets out how it will provide at least 80 million doses of vaccines to the rest of the world – with the announcement of a first tranche of 25 million doses today. 75% of doses will be shared with COVAX, the global equitable access mechanism. This means that almost 19 million doses allocated in this first tranche will be provided to countries and territories around the world hit hard by global supply constraints. “This announcement allows us to quickly get more doses to countries in a strained global supply climate – meaning frontline workers and at-risk populations will receive potentially life-saving vaccinations and bringing us a step closer to ending the acute phase of the pandemic,” Gavi CEO Dr Seth Berkley commented. “We welcome this strong commitment by the Biden-Harris Administration, and look forward to working with the United States Government to operationalise these donations quickly.”

<https://www.gavi.org/news/media-room/gavi-welcomes-us-allocation-plan-vaccine-dose-sharing-19-million-doses-donated>

Community Activities

Praise for Oldham volunteers during Covid pandemic

A charity which has served the community in Oldham during the coronavirus pandemic has spoken

about the value of its "invaluable" volunteers in leading the efforts. Action Together acted as a network before the health crisis, signposting people in the borough to causes that could help them. But following the demand for support during the pandemic, Action Together started taking on its own emergency response volunteers. And they have proved to be imperative in Oldham's fight against the virus. During June, the charity is holding a month of celebration in honour to volunteers who have supported the areas.

<https://www.theoldhamtimes.co.uk/news/19350968.praise-oldham-volunteers-covid-pandemic/>

If we can vaccinate the world, we can beat the climate crisis

It would only cost \$50bn to ensure 40% of the world's population is vaccinated by the end of the year, and 60% by the first half of 2022. This is a recent estimate from the IMF, the latest institution to join a chorus of voices calling for a global vaccination programme to bring Covid-19 under control. The IMF has highlighted the economic benefits of global vaccines, which would be huge. But there is another powerful reason for a worldwide campaign. Vaccinating the world will be crucial if countries are going to act together to confront the climate crisis, which will require many of the same things as delivering vaccines: resources, innovation, ingenuity and a true partnership between rich and developing countries. The Cop26 climate conference in November will be an opportune moment for building this partnership. But to do so, rich countries need to deliver on their early promises to deliver global vaccines.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jun/05/poorer-nations-climate-promises-vaccines-vaccinating-covid>

Coordination was the right path for the EU's vaccine strategy, but lessons need to be learned

The EU's vaccination campaign has gathered pace and is expected to further accelerate in the coming weeks following a surge in available vaccines. This gain in momentum is sorely needed: there is much public frustration over the EU being outpaced by countries like Israel, the United States and—probably most painfully—its former member, the United Kingdom. Inevitably, the question arose whether the EU was acting smartly by attaining and distributing vaccines as a joint effort rather than having member states negotiate contracts individually.

<https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2021/06/04/coordination-was-the-right-path-for-the-eus-vaccine-strategy-but-lessons-need-to-be-learned/>

Working Remotely

Back-to-office blues: Is Wall Street tone-deaf on remote work?

Mark, a vice president at a global bank, has a sweeping view of his bucolic backyard from his home office in suburban New Jersey in the United States. In between virtual meetings, he takes quick breaks to connect with his two elementary school-aged children and talk dinner logistics with his wife. "Overall, working from home has been amazing for our family," Mark, who asked not to use his last name due to job concerns, told Al Jazeera. "I feel like I'm even more productive because I don't commute, and can step up in meaningful ways at home." That newly achieved work-life balance will all end this summer, however, when Mark expects to be summoned back to the office like many in the US financial industry. The heads of big Wall Street firms have made it clear that remote work isn't working for them, and employees are being forced to follow suit.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/6/4/hldback-to-office-blues-is-wall-street-tone-deaf-on-remote-work>

Apple Employees Wrote A Letter To CEO Tim Cook Saying Why They Don't Want To Return To The Office

Tim Cook, the CEO of Apple, told his global workforce of 137,000 employees that they'd have to return to the office beginning early September. It's expected that employees will spend about three days a week at the office and the other two at home or remotely. Not everyone was happy with this

decision. In an open letter to Cook, about 80 employees of Apple, according to the Verge, voiced their displeasure in being told to return to work, stating, "We feel like the current policy is not sufficient in addressing many of our needs." The letter pointed out that workers delivered "the same quality of products and services that Apple is known for, all while working almost completely remotely." The future of work will see battles between companies and their employees.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jackkelly/2021/06/05/apple-employees-wrote-a-letter-to-ceo-tim-cook-saying-why-they-dont-want-to-return-to-the-office/>

Virtual Classrooms

Graduation Rate Expected to Stall This Year at Some High Schools

In the U.S., some larger school districts expect graduation rates to stall or fall because many seniors struggled during online learning, even as states and schools nationwide have dialed back graduation requirements to account for hardships brought by the pandemic. States have waived standardized exit exams and let students repeat 12th grade to make up for pandemic-related learning loss. Teachers and school administrators made home visits to find students on the cusp of graduation who have shown low engagement in class. Projections show that the efforts may not be enough to shore up graduation rates.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/graduation-rate-expected-to-stall-this-year-at-some-high-schools-11622898001>

For some former college students, the pandemic opened a door to finish their degrees

The shift to virtual learning during the pandemic made college more accessible to millions of students who juggle school with full-time jobs, caregiving responsibilities or health issues. When Kelly Martin Broderick, 40, left the University of Maryland Baltimore County in 2014, she was just five classes short of graduating. School stayed on the back burner until the pandemic hit and Broderick lost her job at a Baltimore theater. Then she got a letter from UMBC inviting her back to finish her degree in gender, women's and sexuality studies. Broderick's return to UMBC came as some universities began turning more attention to students who left school before earning a degree, in part, as a way to turn around enrollment declines during the pandemic. For some former students, the push came at the right time.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2021/06/06/college-dropouts-return-virtual-learning/>

After a tough year, schools are axing virtual learning. Some families want to stay online.

As fall approaches, many schools are ending virtual programs and trying to return children to classrooms five days a week. New York City, the nation's largest school district, eliminated remote options for next year. New Jersey's governor announced schools must fully open in fall with no remote learning. Illinois public schools must do the same for almost all students, the state board of education voted last month. Many education experts say in-person instruction is the best way to help hasten an academic recovery for those who fell behind and to address emotional and social consequences after two disrupted school years. But the orders may deny many families, especially parents of color, the choice to continue an education style they say was working for them

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/after-a-tough-year-schools-are-axing-virtual-learning-some-families-want-to-stay-online/ar-AAKJizC>

Clinical psychologist offers advice on pros and cons of online learning

With online schooling, some children get aching eyes, headaches, and body aches. They believe they are given too much work, they are having difficulties getting help when they do not understand a topic, and they still have to be on the computer doing homework long after classes are done for the day. Clinical and counselling psychologist Nidhi Kirpalani said, "Kids are craving to go back to school! Go back to seeing their peers, being out of the house, learning to be themselves and playing in after-school activities or team sports."

<https://newsday.co.tt/2021/06/06/clinical-psychologist-offers-advice-on-pros-and-cons-of-online-learning/>

Public Policies

Vaccinating children 'not a high priority' amid shortage: WHO

The World Health Organization's top vaccines expert has said that immunising children against COVID-19 is not a high priority from a WHO perspective, given the extremely limited global supply of doses. During a social media session on Thursday, Dr Kate O'Brien said children should not be a focus of COVID-19 immunisation programmes, even as increasing numbers of rich countries authorise their coronavirus shots for teenagers and children.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/4/vaccinating-children-not-a-high-priority-amid-shortage-who>

Yemen Covid Surge Threatens to Worsen Country's Humanitarian Crisis

Masks and social distancing are scarce in the port city of Aden, where many see Covid-19 as less of a threat than cholera or typhoid. Yemen has struggled with mass outbreaks of cholera, dengue fever, and typhoid, and poverty has surged to affect as much as 78% of the population since 2015, when Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and their allies began an offensive to restore the government ousted by Iranian-backed Houthi rebels. Now, as the world tries to emerge from a public health disaster, Yemen looks poised to hurtle more deeply into another one. After a first coronavirus wave in mid-2020, Covid-19 has "come roaring back" to Yemen, Mark Lowcock, the United Nations undersecretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator, warned in April.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-06-03/yemen-covid-surge-threatens-to-worsen-country-s-humanitarian-crisis>

Euro 2020: UK Government will NOT ease Covid-19 restrictions for foreign fans travelling

The UK Government will not be easing Covid-19 restrictions around Euro 2020. With Wembley hosting key games, many fans are expected to be flying in. Those from amber-listed countries will face a 10-day quarantine period. The UK has the toughest entry requirements of any of the host countries

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/sportsnews/article-9654749/Euro-2020-UK-Government-NOT-ease-Covid-19-restrictions-foreign-fans-travelling.html>

Exit from lockdown 'to be delayed by two weeks' as Covid cases surge

A two-week delay to the planned easing of restrictions in England on June 21 is reportedly being considered after the number of people in the country with Covid-19 rose by 75 per cent. Multiple reports have also suggested plans to lift restrictions could be scaled down, with social distancing and the wearing of face coverings set to continue amid concerns the Indian variant is fuelling a surge in cases. The UK on Friday recorded its highest number of new confirmed coronavirus cases – 6,238 – since late March, according to official figures

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/hospitality-mark-drakeford-office-for-national-statistics-matt-hancock-england-b938901.html>

UK approves Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine for children aged 12-15

The UK has approved the Pfizer/BioNTech coronavirus vaccine for use in children aged 12-15. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) authorised the use of the jab in the younger age group on Friday following a review of its safety,

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/uk/uk-approves-pfizer-covid-19-vaccine-for-children-aged-12-15-1.4584504>

The U.S. Is Sending 1 Million Vaccines To Mexico Border Cities And Resort Spots

One million Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccines are heading to Mexico from the U.S. with most of the shots set to service resort areas and spots along the border. The batch of vaccines is part of the 25 million excess doses the White House announced on Thursday would be shipped to other countries around the world. Much of the vaccine distribution will be through COVAX, an international system aimed at helping to vaccinate people in the world's poorest countries.

<https://www.npr.org/2021/06/04/1003144624/u-s-sending-1-million-coronavirus-vaccines-to-mexico-border-cities-resort-spots>

EU pushes rival plan to Covid-19 vaccine IP waiver, but some deride it as ‘meaningless’

Amid intense debate over equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines, the European Union is offering a rival plan to a controversial proposal that would temporarily waive intellectual property protections in a World Trade Organization Agreement. But critics say the alternative is inadequate. The proposed plan is designed to safeguard patent rights, a hot-button issue for the pharmaceutical industry and some EU countries where drug makers are based. Instead, the EU suggested several ideas to increase equitable vaccine distribution, such as limiting export restrictions, voluntary licensing, sharing expertise, tiered pricing, making it easier for countries to use existing rules to override patents in some cases, and new investments in manufacturing plants in developing countries

<https://www.statnews.com/pharmalot/2021/06/04/covid19-vaccine-patents-europe-waiver/>

Chile approves 2nd doses of AstraZeneca's vaccine, with new age limit

Chile said on Friday that people inoculated with AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine should get their second dose, but health officials put a new limit on the age of recipients until an investigation into possible complications is completed. On Thursday, the health ministry said a 31-year-old man had developed thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS) - a rare but serious condition involving blood clots with a low platelet count - seven days after his first AstraZeneca vaccine injection

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/chile-approves-2nd-doses-astrazenecas-vaccine-with-new-age-limit-2021-06-04/>

Brazil's Anvisa approves Russian Sputnik V vaccine, with conditions

Brazilian health regulator Anvisa on Friday gave the green light for states to import the Russian COVID-19 vaccine Sputnik V, but with conditions attached. Anvisa's board voted 4-1 to grant the conditional approval after more than seven hours of deliberation, following the recommendation of its technical staff earlier in the day. Anvisa also voted to approve, again with conditions, the Covaxin shot made by Bharat Biotech, a private company based in the Indian city of Hyderabad.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/brazil-health-regulator-technical-staff-recommend-conditions-any-approval-2021-06-04/>

Maintaining Services

Nearly 400,000 people still have long Covid a year after initial infection, new stats show

The number of people suffering from symptoms of long Covid more than a year after their initial coronavirus infection has jumped to almost 400,000. New data from the Office for National Statistics based on a survey of patients found the numbers of patients with persistent symptoms after 12 months jumped from 70,000 in March to 376,000 in May. Overall, the ONS said an estimated one million people had self-reported signs of long Covid which last for more than four weeks.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/long-covid-symptoms-coronavirus-update-b1859578.html>

NHS says it can't provide extra Covid vaccines in Blackburn despite infection rate

The NHS cannot provide thousands of extra doses of Covid-19 vaccines to Blackburn with Darwen borough, despite it having the highest infection rate in the UK and a death rate almost a third higher than the national average. The local MP said it “beggared belief” that Blackburn’s repeated pleas to continue surge vaccinations had been knocked back, arguing the move will place the NHS under “overwhelming and unnecessary pressure”. Correspondence seen by the Guardian shows Blackburn’s director of public health warning the NHS that not providing additional doses would lead to avoidable deaths and the NHS being swamped within four weeks, calling it “unfair, unjust and

avoidable". In mid-May 19,500 extra doses were sent to Blackburn and surrounding areas to distribute by 30 May after an outbreak of the Delta variant of Covid, which originated in India.

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/04/no-more-vaccine-surge-in-blackburn-says-nhs-as-infection-rate-grows?utm_term=Autofeed&CMP=tw_t_gu&utm_medium&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1622791577

Double jab cuts risk of hospitalisation with Indian Covid by 93% to almost nothing but un-vaccinated are MORE at risk than in previous waves: Freedom Day dilemma as cases in England spike 76% to 86,000 and R rate rises to between 1 and 1.2

Pfizer vaccine produces fewer antibody levels Indian variant than those against previously circulating strains. Joint study also suggests levels of antibodies are lower with increasing age, and that levels decline over time. Researchers say this provides extra evidence in support of plans to deliver a vaccine booster in the autumn. But it could also fuel concern that the Pfizer vaccine is less effective in preventing serious illness with Delta. It comes as PHE said the Indian variant appears more likely to put people in hospital than other strains

https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9650283/Pfizer-vaccine-recipient-lower-antibodies-targeting-Indian-variant-study.html?ito=social-twitter_dailymailUK

Healthcare Innovations

'Mix and match' Covid booster jabs may be offered in UK

Ministers are considering giving people a different type of Covid vaccine as an autumn booster, it has emerged, after early results from "mix and match" trials appeared to show promise for an enhanced immune response. Four different coronavirus jabs have been approved for use in the UK, with more under regulatory review. While people are currently offered two doses of the same jab, researchers have been exploring whether offering a second dose of a different Covid vaccine could generate a stronger immune response. It is also expected that people will be offered a third, "booster" injection, potentially in the autumn, in part to protect them against variants with some resistance to existing vaccines. One possibility being looked at is that this third jab could be of a different type to people's initial two, a government source said.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jun/06/mix-and-match-covid-booster-jabs-may-be-offered-in-uk-vaccine-autumn>

Delta Covid variant first identified in India now dominant in the UK, Public Health England announces

The Indian variant has overtaken the Kent strain to be the most dominant type of coronavirus in the UK, experts believe. Public Health England said cases of the B.1.1.7 variant, now known as Delta, have risen by 5,472 in a week to 12,431. There is also early evidence that there may be an increased risk of hospitalisation from Delta compared to the Kent variant, which has been renamed Alpha.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/delta-covid-variant-identified-india-now-dominant-in-uk-1034415>

CDC investigating heart inflammation following COVID-19 vaccination

An article raised awareness of heart inflammation following a COVID-19 vaccination in several cases. Only young males were affected. The CDC highlights that the risk is rare and vaccination to reduce COVID-19 transmission is still recommended.

<https://thehill.com/health/556864-cdc-investigating-heart-inflammation-following>

C.D.C. Says Child Covid Hospitalizations Are Rare, but More Frequent Than Flu

The number of hospitalizations related to Covid-19 among adolescents in the United States was about three times greater than hospitalizations linked to influenza over three recent flu seasons, according to a study published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Friday. The

findings run counter to claims that influenza is more threatening to children than Covid-19 is, an argument that has been used in the push to reopen schools, and to question the value of vaccinating adolescents against the coronavirus. "Much of this suffering can be prevented," the C.D.C. director, Dr. Rochelle P. Walensky, said in a statement. "Vaccination is our way out of this pandemic."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/04/health/covid-flu-hospitalizations-children.html>

Black fungus: Is diabetes behind India's high number of cases?

About 12,000 cases of a condition known as "black fungus" have been reported in India, mostly in patients recovering from Covid-19. This severe infection is normally very rare and has a mortality rate of about 50%. Some medical experts have suggested India has seen cases growing because of the high prevalence of diabetes. But are other factors at work and what is happening in other countries?

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-57252077>

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https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9650283/Pfizer-vaccine-recipients-lower-antibodies-targeting-Indian-variant-study.html?ito=social-twitter_dailymailus

AstraZeneca's COVID-19 Vaccine Safe for MS Patients, Small Study...

AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine appears to be reasonably safe for people with multiple sclerosis (MS), according to a small study of its use in the U.K. Vaccine side effects were in line with those experienced by the general population, its researchers said, such as flu-like symptoms and sore arms. The study, "Experience with the COVID-19 AstraZeneca vaccination in people with multiple sclerosis," was published in the journal Multiple Sclerosis and Related Disorders.

<https://multiplesclerosisnewstoday.com/news-posts/2021/06/04/astrazeneca-covid-19-vaccine-safety-ms-patients-study/>

COVID-19 still poses severe risk to unvaccinated teens: CDC

While most coronavirus hospitalizations occur in adults, the coronavirus still poses the threat of severe disease to teens, according to a new study issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Nearly a third of teens ages 12-17 hospitalized with COVID-19 ended up in the intensive care unit, with 5% ultimately being placed on ventilators.

<https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/covid-19-poses-severe-risk-unvaccinated-teens-cdc/story?id=78084484>

Sinovac's COVID-19 vaccine gains China nod for emergency use in kids, adolescents

China has approved emergency use of Sinovac Biotech's COVID-19 vaccine in people aged between three and 17, its chairman Yin Weidong told state TV late on Friday. China's mass vaccination drive, which administered 723.5 million doses of vaccines as of June 3, is currently only open to those aged 18 and above. When Sinovac's vaccine will be offered to younger groups depends on health authorities formulating China's inoculation strategies, Yin told state TV in an live interview.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/sinovacs-covid-19-vaccine-gains-china-approval-emergency-use-children-2021-06-05/>