

Connecting Communities for COVID19 News

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Isolation Tips

How COVID-19 lockdown measures — and their outcomes — varied in cities around the world

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Chinese cities have repeatedly imposed lockdowns following their central government's stubborn pursuit of Zero-COVID. But lockdowns weren't limited to authoritarian regimes such as China. Many democracies also imposed some form of lockdowns to curb the virus transmission. How effective were they? Was it worth it? And who was the most adversely affected? These are meaningful questions to reflect on, especially as drastic COVID-19 measures have been lifted as the severity of the virus's impact has waned.

<https://theconversation.com/how-covid-19-lockdown-measures-and-their-outcomes-varied-in-cities-around-the-world-184682>

Isolation facilities for covid-19: towards a person centred approach

Chuan De Foo and colleagues argue that isolation facilities have the potential to interrupt the transmission of infectious agents, particularly in the earlier stages of infectious disease outbreaks, but they must deliver person centred care. Two years into the covid-19 pandemic, footage from isolation centres in Shanghai showing unrest have raised questions about the safety, utility, and appropriate use of such facilities

<https://www.bmj.com/content/378/bmj-2021-069558>

China Covid Cases Rise as Shenzhen Flare Up Ensnarers BYD, Huawei

China's Covid-19 infections rebounded, with an increase in cases in the south threatening the operations of industry giants including BYD Co. and Huawei Technologies Co. Nationwide, cases were 868 for Monday, CCTV reported, up from 680 a day earlier. Attention is shifting to the southern manufacturing hub of Shenzhen, where 19 local cases were detected and authorities have ordered some of China's biggest firms to operate within a "closed loop" system for seven days, raising concerns about disruptions to global supply chains. The city government asked its 100 biggest companies, including iPhone maker Foxconn and oil producer Cnooc Ltd. to restrict operations only to employees living within a closed loop or bubble, with little to no contact with people beyond their plants or offices.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-26/china-covid-cases-rise-as-shenzhen-flare-up-ensnarers-top-firms>

Hygiene Helpers

Novavax COVID-19 vaccine: When will it be available in the US?

Earlier this month, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced an emergency use authorization (EUA) for the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine. Research shows Novavax to be 100% effective in preventing moderate to severe COVID-19. Novavax uses a traditional vaccine model used previously for influenza and shingles vaccines. The United States Department of Health and Human Services has secured 3.2 million doses of Novavax for distribution in the U.S., with ordering opening to medical professionals in the coming weeks.

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/fda-and-cdc-recommend-novavax-covid-19-vaccine-what-to-know>

EU states should act now for COVID-19 waves in winter-official

EU member states should start preparing now for a new wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in autumn and winter, the bloc's health chief said on Monday, saying there had been a "worrying increase" in outbreaks. European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Stella Kyriakides also warned there was no room for complacency, saying the pandemic was not over. "Unfortunately the pandemic has shown a worrying increase in several countries," she told Cyprus state radio.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eu-states-should-act-now-covid-19-waves-winter-official-2022-07-25/>

Covid-19: Hospital visitors refusing to wear masks, ward outbreaks 'unavoidable'

Hospital visitors who refuse to wear masks or walk around wards visiting different patients are creating difficulties for Northland hospitals trying to manage Covid-19 infections. Dargaville Hospital's general ward reopened to visitors on Tuesday, a week after rising infection numbers put a halt to visits. Whangārei Hospital's ward 1, an orthopaedic ward, has not had any visitors since July 14 because of a spike in Covid-19 infections. It will reopen to visitors on Wednesday, as long as there are no further Covid-19 cases.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/coronavirus/129381722/covid19-hospital-visitors-refusing-to-wear-masks-ward-outbreaks-unavoidable>

Community Activities

Rise in long Covid sufferers unable to work costs UK £1.5bn a year

Long Covid is costing the UK £1.5bn in lost earnings per year as the number of people off work with the condition rises to almost 2 million, according to new research. The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) think tank estimated that 110,000 people are absent from work at any time due to long Covid, with those who were on lower incomes before the pandemic more likely to be sufferers. One in 10 long Covid sufferers who were in employment stop work while they have the condition, the IFS said. The findings will heap further pressure on the government to tackle a problem which is expected to grow further as infections rise again.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/long-covid-off-work-earnings-ifs-b2131706.html>

China continues to adapt border control to COVID-19 situation: authority

China's National Immigration Administration (NIA) will continue to adjust and improve entry-and-exit control measures in line with the changing COVID-19 situation to fully meet people's necessary need for cross-border travel, a spokesperson said Tuesday. The immigration administration work will also continue to facilitate enterprises' production and operation to promote the country's opening-up, as well as international exchanges and cooperation, said Zhang Ning, the spokesperson for NIA.

<https://english.news.cn/20220726/b843179992934c62a619b65bcff9fa5d/c.html>

Pandemic Drinking Led to Thousands of UK Hospital Admissions, Deaths

Increased drinking fuelled by the pandemic could lead to thousands of extra hospital admissions, deaths and cases of disease over the next 20 years, experts have warned. A new study commissioned by NHS England from the University of Sheffield found that while lighter drinkers cut their consumption during the pandemic, heavier drinkers drank more and may never return to where they were. Experts found that 25 to 34-year-olds who were drinking at risky levels before the pandemic were the most likely to increase their drinking when Covid-19 hit.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-25/thousands-of-hospital-admissions-and-deaths-caused-by-pandemic-drinking>

Schools Choose Cheaper Ventilation Options as BA.5 Subvariant Spreads

As the highly contagious Omicron BA.5 subvariant surges across the nation, weeks before schools reopen for fall, most U.S. districts are choosing fast, cheap ventilation solutions despite billions in federal aid, data show. A federal study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found nearly two-thirds of schools aren't planning to replace or upgrade their heating, ventilation and air-

conditioning systems. Instead, about 70% of schools in the CDC survey reported low-cost steps to increase student safety, including relocating activities outdoors, inspecting and validating existing HVAC systems, and opening doors and windows. About a third of schools were installing high-efficiency particulate air-filtration systems in high-risk areas, according to the study released in June. Some schools have cited supply-chain issues, tight deadlines or bureaucratic challenges as reasons for not upgrading.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/schools-choose-cheaper-ventilation-options-as-ba-5-subvariant-spreads-11658741400>

Calling In Sick or Going on Vacation, Workers Aren't Showing Up This Summer

A rise in Covid-19 absences in recent weeks amid the spread of the BA.5 subvariant, combined with planned time off, has left restaurants, hotel chains, manufacturers and other workplaces struggling to keep operations running this summer. At some companies, bosses say, staffing is harder now than at any previous stage in the pandemic. For the period from June 29 to July 11, 3.9 million Americans said they didn't work because they were sick with Covid-19 or were caring for someone with it, according to Census Bureau data. In the comparable period last year, 1.8 million people missed work for those reasons. Many workers also are taking vacations that they put off over the previous two years. According to the Labor Department, 4.8 million workers took vacation or personal days during the week of the Census Bureau's June household survey this year, compared with 3.7 million workers who were taking time off in the comparable period last year.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/calling-in-sick-or-going-on-vacation-workers-arent-showing-up-this-summer-11658741402>

Getting Around After the Pandemic Will Be a Shared Exercise

The report concludes that consumers' mobility demands are evolving in seemingly contradictory ways. On one hand, people want inexpensive options, but on the other, the pandemic accelerated a shift away from mass transit, which is the cheapest service available. Ultimately, consumers want agile, on-demand, and affordable transportation, which creates challenges that are difficult to reconcile. In that environment, new players will struggle to make money as they try to fulfill these demands.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-26/getting-around-after-the-pandemic-will-be-a-shared-exercise>

Working Remotely

Gen Z, rejoice: Most of the bosses who insist on return to office will retire soon

Executives are divided along generational lines when it comes to their top concerns in implementing flexible schedules, according to new research by the Future Forum. While polling executives' concerns regarding flexible work, the research consortium found that older managers (aged 50 and over) cared most about hybrid-work schedule coordination and then productivity and learning. Coming in last in their priorities was inequities surrounding flexible work. The issue of inequality surrounding remote and in-person work options, meanwhile, was the number one concern for younger executives.

<https://fortune.com/2022/07/26/remote-work-gen-x-boomer-bosses-dislike-more-than-millennials-gen-z-retirement/>

Costa Rica Offers Digital Nomad Visas To People Who Are Working Remotely

Costa Rica is providing a digital nomad visa scheme. The talks about introducing the visa scheme have been on since August 2021 but it has now finally been put into effect. Here's how you can qualify for the visa scheme - you will have to work in a foreign or a non-Costa Rican company and the work allows you to work remotely. To secure your stand, you will have to earn a minimum of \$3,000 (Rs. 2,39,320.20 approx) per month.

<https://www.outlookindia.com/travel/costa-rica-offers-digital-nomad-visas-to-people-who-are-working-remotely-news-211987>

Virtual Classrooms

Study: Pandemic-era suspension rate drops may be misleading

Many California school districts were on track to have substantially higher rates of suspensions showing racial disparities during the 2019-20 school year had the coronavirus pandemic not forced schools to go remote, according to a study released Tuesday by the Center for Civil Rights Remedies at the UCLA Civil Rights Project. COVID-19's abrupt arrival in early 2020 caused schools across the nation to move to virtual learning, and as a result suspension rates fell for the remainder of that school year.

<https://www.k12dive.com/news/pandemic-drops-in-suspension-rates-may-be-misleading/628100/>

Impact of COVID-19 on student attainment and pedagogical needs when undertaking independent scientific research

University education was affected worldwide as COVID-19 turned into a pandemic. Universities in the UK commenced distance learning, gradually moving to more blended distance learning alongside face-to-face teaching. Veterinary medicine courses were able to operate blended learning with enhanced health and safety procedures within a few months. Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the School of Veterinary Medicine and Science, University of Nottingham (SVMS) transitioned to distance learning, with all undergraduate learners conducting their teaching, learning, pastoral care, assessment and research activities remotely. Four months later SVMS started hybrid/blended teaching, with both face-to-face and distance learning continuing into 2022 (two academic cohorts).

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ahe.12842>

Public Policies

Monkeypox Proves Elusive Foe as WHO Sounds Alarm on Global Spread

The Covid-19 outbreak forced governments around the world to revamp their pandemic response programs, invest in drugs and vaccines and establish viral surveillance systems. Now monkeypox is putting those upgrades to the test -- and they're falling short. Getting out in front of the global flare-up of the monkeypox virus, which has spread to about 16,000 people in more than 70 countries in just a few months, is an achievable goal, according to infectious disease experts. Yet the lack of urgency and coordination in testing and treatment in many parts of the world has prompted the World Health Organization to sound the alarm.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-24/monkeypox-proves-elusive-foe-as-who-sounds-alarm-on-global-spread>

Novavax Announces Expanded Approval of Nuvaxovid™ COVID-19 Vaccine for Adolescents Aged 12 through 17 in Japan

Novavax, Inc, a biotechnology company dedicated to developing and commercializing next-generation vaccines for serious infectious diseases, today announced that Nuvaxovid™ COVID-19 vaccine received expanded manufacturing and marketing approval from the Japan Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) for primary immunization to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) in adolescents aged 12 through 17. Novavax has partnered with Takeda to develop, manufacture, and distribute Nuvaxovid in Japan.

<https://apnews.com/press-release/pr-newswire/covid-technology-health-severe-acute-respiratory-syndrome-infectious-diseases-91c154124489f650fabe516d389f3fe1>

Monkeypox vaccine from Bavarian Nordic wins EU approval

Danish biotechnology company Bavarian Nordic said on Monday the European Commission had given permission for its Imvanex vaccine to be marketed as protection against monkeypox, as recommended last week by the European Medicines Agency (EMA). The approval comes just one day after the World Health Organization issued a high-level alert declaring the rapidly spreading

monkeypox outbreak as a global health emergency

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/bavarian-nordic-monkeypox-vaccine-wins-eu-approval-2022-07-25/>

China Approves First Homegrown Antiviral Pill to Combat Covid

China approved its first homegrown Covid antiviral, as regulators cleared a medicine from Genuine Biotech that was previously used to treat HIV. The National Medical Products Administration gave the nod to Azvudine from the Henan-based drug company for adults with moderate Covid-19 disease under an emergency use authorization, according to a statement by the agency on Monday. The drug will compete with Pfizer Inc.'s Paxlovid, which was approved in China in February shortly before the country experienced its worst outbreak of the pandemic.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-25/china-approves-first-homegrown-antiviral-pill-to-combat-covid>

Maintaining Services

Feds look ahead to next-generation COVID vaccines

The White House tomorrow will host a summit on the future of COVID-19 vaccines, which will be streamed online. One of the main topics is speeding development of a more broadly protective COVID-19 vaccine. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) vaccine advisory group recently recommended a bivalent booster shot that includes the original SARS-CoV-2 strain and an Omicron variant, and at the meeting, several members aired concerns that officials will more frequently face the challenge of tweaking the vaccine to keep up with the quickly evolving virus. At the global level, researchers are working on a roadmap for developing a new coronavirus vaccine to broadly protect against the most dangerous ones.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/07/feds-look-ahead-next-generation-covid-vaccines>

Monkeypox Vaccine Maker Bavarian Nordic Considers 24-Hour Emergency Production

Bavarian Nordic A/S, the only company with a vaccine approved for monkeypox, said it's preparing to run production through the night to meet surging demand after the virus outbreak was declared a global emergency. The flare-up of monkeypox, which has spread to about 16,000 people in more than 70 countries in just a few months, was declared a public-health emergency of international concern by the head of the World Health Organization over the weekend. This is the highest level of alert that aims to marshal more resources globally to curb the outbreak and is the first such ruling since coronavirus started sweeping around the world.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-25/monkeypox-vaccine-maker-considers-24-hour-emergency-production>

China's Zero-Covid Policy Drags on Vaccination Drive

China's sluggish progress in vaccinating the elderly and vulnerable against Covid-19 is impeding any departure from the cycles of mass testing and lockdowns that are hobbling the world's second-largest economy. While the government stepped up efforts to raise inoculation rates in recent months, tens of millions of Chinese over 60 remain entirely unvaccinated against Covid-19, and many more have yet to take booster shots needed to protect against the Omicron subvariants now fueling outbreaks. Officials have tried to overcome skepticism and inertia against vaccination, particularly among the elderly, by revealing that top Chinese leaders have taken domestically developed shots and lashing out at what they called irresponsible rumors alleging serious side effects from vaccines.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-zero-covid-policy-drags-on-vaccination-drive-11658745899>

Record number of COVID-hit Australians in hospital as Omicron surges

The number of Australians admitted to hospitals with COVID-19 hit a record of about 5,450 on Monday, official data showed, as the spread of highly contagious new Omicron sub-variants strains

the healthcare system nationwide. The figure has grown since late June, as the BA.4 and BA.5 strains became dominant since they can evade immune protection, whether from vaccination or prior infection, while some experts say the latter can be as infectious as measles.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/record-number-covid-hit-australians-hospital-omicron-surges-2022-07-25/>

Healthcare Innovations

COVID-19 antivirals may cut risk of hospitalization, death

McMaster University researchers in Ontario led the systematic review and network meta-analysis of 40 randomized clinical trials that included 17,563 patients comparing the effectiveness of 16 different antiviral drugs or drug combinations, including molnupiravir, nirmatrelvir-ritonavir (Paxlovid), and remdesivir, with standard care or a placebo in adults with non-severe COVID-19 up to Apr 25, 2022. The researchers noted that most antiviral trials to date have included hospitalized patients with severe or critical disease rather than those with milder illnesses. "Furthermore, although efficacy data from trials of molnupiravir, nirmatrelvir-ritonavir and remdesivir are promising, no head-to-head trials have compared these drugs," they wrote. "This is particularly important as health care systems attempt to prioritize access to effective COVID-19 treatments in the early stages of the disease."

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/07/covid-19-antivirals-may-cut-risk-hospitalization-death>

Studies find more clues to potential cause of severe hepatitis cases in children

The recent rise in cases of acute hepatitis among children is likely linked to a common childhood virus, two independent studies from British researchers have suggested. Countries across the world began reporting cases of severe liver inflammation, or hepatitis of unknown origin, in children in April 2022. At least 1,010 cases have now been found in 35 countries, according to the World Health Organization. In total, 46 children have required a liver transplant and 22 have died.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/studies-find-more-clues-potential-cause-severe-hepatitis-cases-children-2022-07-25/>