

Connecting Communities for COVID19 News

8th Mar 2021

Isolation Tips

Covid: Mental health money for children's services

In England, money to support children and young people's mental health after the "disruption" of the pandemic has been cautiously welcomed. It is part of a £500m pot for mental health services across the board, announced in November. The government confirmed £79m would be allocated to support children in school and in the community. Charities and campaigners said the pandemic had significantly impacted young people's mental health. One in six young people are now estimated to have a mental health problem, according to Emma Thomas, head of charity Young Mind.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/health-56294782>

COVID-19 lockdown has significantly increased loneliness, social issues among women

Social distancing guidelines have reduced the spread of COVID-19, but lockdowns and isolation also have created or aggravated other well-being concerns, reports new research. Mayo Clinic investigators found a significant increase in loneliness and a decrease in feelings of friendship during the pandemic. The study, published Feb. 20 in the journal Social Science & Medicine, also showed disproportionate negative effects among women and those with poorer health. The researchers say that while physical distance is important during the pandemic, distance within and among relationships can cause undue harm to a person's mental health and well-being.

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20210304/COVID-19-lockdown-has-significantly-increased-loneliness-social-issues-among-women.aspx>

Hygiene Helpers

You've been vaccinated — the CDC is finalizing guidance on what's safe for you to do

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is finalizing guidance aimed at clarifying what Americans who have received COVID-19 vaccines should and shouldn't do, according to two sources at the agency familiar with its drafting. The upcoming guidance, first reported by Politico, is expected to include that fully vaccinated individuals should be able to gather in small groups with other people who have also been vaccinated. The CDC currently does not recommend in-person gatherings with the general public, saying "gathering virtually or with the people you live with is the safest choice." Even for people who have been fully vaccinated, other mitigation measures will still be recommended, including wearing a mask in public and social distancing.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/cdc-covid-vaccine-guidelines-after/>

Thailand mulls Covid-19 vaccine passports to boost tourism sector

Thailand is considering Covid-19 vaccine passports and quarantine exemption amid efforts to boost the ailing tourism sector as inoculation rolled out worldwide. Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha has ordered the foreign ministry to conduct a study into the vaccine passports. "If we decide to unveil the plan, China will be among the first countries that we're going to negotiate with," Thai Deputy Prime Minister Wisanu Krea-ngam said

<https://www.thestar.com.my/aseanplus/aseanplus-news/2021/03/06/thailand-mulls-covid-19-vaccine-passports-to-boost-tourism-sector>

The great school reopening - what could go wrong?

To reduce the risk of spread of the virus, the government has introduced mass testing. All secondary

school pupils will be offered three tests on their return before being asked to carry them out twice a week at home. These will be rapid lateral flow tests that provide a quick result on the spot, unlike the ones that are carried out in official testing centres - known as PCR tests - that are sent off to labs. The rapid tests are less accurate - they may pick up only between half to three-quarters of positive cases, but given they are being used to spot cases before people develop symptoms or for those who do not develop symptoms, the government is adamant they have an important role.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-56285179>

Covid-19: Is school mask and testing policy flawed?

Schools reopen to all pupils next week in England - the first part of the UK where this will happen. It is a crucial step for children and wider society in the route out of lockdown. Masks are to be worn by secondary school children in classes, while mass testing is being introduced. But will these steps be a help? And does it even matter if infection rates go up?

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-56285179>

Covid-19 News: Restaurant Dining and Lack of Mask Mandates Are Each Linked to U.S. Virus Spread, C.D.C. Says

The world needs up to 10 billion syringes for coronavirus doses, and manufacturers are pulling out all the stops to meet the demand. The pandemic's racial disparities persist in the U.S. vaccine rollout.

<https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/03/05/world/covid-19-coronavirus>

How to Wear Your Mask 'Knotted and Tucked'

Step one: Fold your mask in half lengthwise. Step two: With the mask still folded, take one ear loop and knot it, keeping the knot as close as possible to the edge of the mask. Repeat on the other side. Step three: Unfold your mask. It should look like a little canoe with holes on either end. Fold the extra fabric on each end inward, as if to close up the canoe. Step four: Put on the mask, taking care to make sure the fabric you folded inward stays folded. This should prevent any air from coming in through gaps on the side of your mask.

<https://coronavirus.medium.com/how-to-wear-your-mask-knotted-and-tucked-a46d23c03c6>

Community Activities

Paris police clear Seine riverside over lack of social distancing

French police cleared the banks of the River Seine in central Paris on Saturday over concerns people were getting too close together and not respecting coronavirus social distancing rules. Hundreds of people were asked to leave the area - popular for strolling and picnicking on sunny days - and police officers closed the riverbanks for the rest of the day. "Social distancing rules are not being respected," police called out through a megaphone. The police has regularly been clearing the area over the past few weeks with warmer weather bringing people out to take advantage of the sunshine before a curfew kicks in from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-france-curfew-idUSKBN2AY0LA>

Night and day in South America: Buenos Aires welcomes nightlife, new lockdowns in Brazil

In Buenos Aires on Friday night the doors of the Colón Theater reopened for the first time in a year since being shut because of the coronavirus pandemic, a sign of how the capital of Argentina is slowly letting its hair down once again. In neighboring Brazil, however, Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro have gone in the opposite direction, both announcing tighter restrictions this week, a reflection of how the two regional powerhouses are on completely different tracks battling the virus.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-argentina/night-and-day-in-south-america-buenos-aires-welcomes-nightlife-new-lockdowns-in-brazil-idUSKBN2AY0LW>

Dutch dance lovers offered lockdown relief at test event

Dance music lovers in Amsterdam were offered a short relief from COVID-19 lockdown on Saturday, treated to their first live show in over a year while serving as guinea pigs in a research project. A total of 1,300 people were allowed at a carefully orchestrated test event in Amsterdam's biggest music hall, the ZiggoDome, which in normal times has a capacity of up to 17,000. Dancing to tunes delivered by Dutch DJs Sam Feldt, Sunnery James & Ryan Marciano and others, the fans were followed in all their movements and contacts through a tag they were made to wear, in an effort to see how events might safely be opened up for the public again.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-netherlands-dance/dutch-dance-lovers-offered-lockdown-relief-at-test-event-idUSKBN2AZ08X>

Funding joy for organisers of Bishop's Stortford's Covid-19 lifeline support scheme Operation CommUNITY

A "fantastic web of support" is keeping Bishop's Stortford-based lifeline scheme Operation CommUNITY on track – and organisers have revealed they have secured funding until the end of March. The scheme, which was launched in March 2020 at the start of the first coronavirus lockdown to support vulnerable people, ran out of funding in January but received a Covid Winter Grant of £9,634 from Hertfordshire Community Foundation to keep its vital support network going. Lisa Rodmell, of Bishop's Wellbeing and lead volunteer for Operation CommUNITY, revealed the scheme had delivered 4,999 meals to individuals, families and homeless people, and heaped praise on the community for its continued support.

<https://www.bishopstortfordindependent.co.uk/news/lifeline-scheme-celebrates-fantastic-web-of-support-and-funding-victory-9158897/>

New York cinemas reopen, brightening outlook for theaters

After growing cobwebs for nearly a year, movie theaters in New York City reopen Friday, returning film titles to Manhattan marquees that had for the last 12 months instead read messages like "Wear a mask" and "We'll be back soon." For a theatrical business that has been punished by the pandemic, the resumption of moviegoing in New York — is a crucial first step in revival. "It's a symbolic moment," said Michael Barker, co-president of the New York-based Sony Pictures Classics, which on Friday released the Oscar contenders "The Father" and "The Truffle Hunters" in Manhattan theaters. "It says that there is hope for the theatrical world to reactivate itself."

<https://apnews.com/article/entertainment-new-york-new-york-city-coronavirus-pandemic-manhattan-1c80bebe9e67d20185b9c0e912574b29>

Working Remotely

Working from home: Hybrid remote working may be the future

In England, the sudden shift to working from home a year ago may have changed the lives of office workers forever. Nearly half of all those in employment did some of their job in their houses or flats after the first lockdown was announced last March, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) – many for the first time. Now the Government is trying to work out when and how to get people back into offices, to help boost the economy. Boris Johnson issued a plea last summer for people to return to their offices to save city centres, before having to perform a U-turn as Covid-19 rates rocketed. However, the Prime Minister said last week that he is confident that workers will return to traditional work patterns.

<https://inews.co.uk/inews-lifestyle/work/working-from-home-hybrid-remote-working-may-be-the-future-899118>

Homeworking sounds good - until your job takes over your life

Big companies seem more open than ever to the idea of homeworking arrangements staying in place even after the worst of the pandemic is over and restrictions are lifted, and for some people the old grind of commuting and congregating in offices may at least partially be over. What this

could mean for the smaller businesses that depend on the presence of large employers is clear from our emptied-out city centres, but “hybrid working” is the season’s most fashionable corporate concept. In more sober tones, the Financial Times recently reported that some of Britain’s largest employers are in the midst of “reviews of working practices” and that most of the companies its journalists had contacted said they expected to soon introduce employment models split between the office and home.

https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/mar/07/homeworking-job-takes-over-life-office-grind-remote-working?CMP=fb_cif

How Remote Work Is Reshaping America’s Urban Geography

A year ago, just before the start of pandemic lockdowns, some 10% or less of the U.S. labor force worked remotely full-time. Within a month, according to Gallup and other surveys, around half of American workers were at distant desktops. Today, most of them still are. And surveys of employers and employees alike suggest a fundamental shift. While forecasts differ, as much as a quarter of the 160-million-strong U.S. labor force is expected to stay fully remote in the long term, and many more are likely to work remotely a significant part of the time. This rapid reordering accelerates a trend that has been under way for years. And it doesn’t just change the dynamic between workers and companies. It is affecting the economic fates of cities and communities large and small, but especially smaller ones

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-remote-work-is-reshaping-americas-urban-geography-11614960100>

Share of Brits working from the office rises to pre-lockdown level, as remote working appeal fades

The percentage of people travelling to work has returned to the same level as before Christmas, before the third nationwide lockdown began, according to new data from the Office for National Statistics. Nearly 40 per cent of people surveyed said they were solely working from the office or job site at the end of February, matching the level seen before 22 December, despite rules ordering people to work from home when they can. It’s also the first time since December that the share of employees leaving home to go to work exceeded those solely working remotely. The percentage of workers who are only working from home has also been gradually falling since mid-February and was 32 per cent at the end of the month.

<https://www.cityam.com/share-of-brits-working-from-the-office-rises-to-pre-lockdown-level-as-remote-working-appeal-fades/>

Virtual Classrooms

Attention in e-classes wanes after 40 minutes, says survey

In India, after almost a year of remote learning, experts mapping the academic impact of that shift have noticed a reduced attention span among children attending e-classes. A survey of 200 Marathi schools conducted by the Bharatiya Shikshan Mandal (BSM) in Pune showed that students got bored after 40 minutes of the online teaching sessions. The research also highlighted lack of internet and background disturbances as challenges during online education.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/pune/attention-in-e-classes-wanes-after-40-minutes-says-survey/articleshow/81369986.cms>

Students are struggling to read behind masks and screens during COVID, but ‘expectations are no different’

Too many children may be falling behind in the reading game during the pandemic, teachers and experts say. The USA TODAY Network visited a handful of classrooms in different states to see how schools are adapting at a time when the teachers' axiom about students learning to read in early grades so that they can read to learn the rest of their lives has never been put to a greater test. Lost time from when schools shut down, inconsistent schedules since then, the limitations of teaching

over video conference or even in person with masks and social distancing — these handicaps are likely to have a greater effect on children learning to read than those at other grade levels, said Anjenette Holmes, a professor at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette's Picard Center for Child Development & Lifelong Learning.

<https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/news/education/2021/03/07/learning-read-amid-covid-online-school-person-kids-lag-behind/4545832001/>

Public Policies

COVID-19: Dalai Lama given first coronavirus vaccine dose - as he urges others to be brave and take jab

The Dalai Lama has received his first dose of a coronavirus vaccine. After being given a jab at the Zonal Hospital in north India, the 85-year-old spiritual leader urged others to be brave and get vaccinated. "In order to prevent some serious problems, this injection is very, very helpful," he said.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-dalai-lama-given-first-coronavirus-vaccine-dose-as-he-urges-others-to-be-brave-and-take-jab-12238512>

AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccines Arrive in Uganda

Uganda received 864,000 doses of the AstraZeneca/Oxford COVID-19 vaccine on March 5, shipped under the international COVAX initiative. "The long awaited Covid Vaccines are here," tweeted Ministry of Health Permanent Secretary Dr. Diana Atwine. "The vaccines are safe and efficacious." The Ministry of Health said that vaccinations would begin on March 10, and proceed in a phased rollout with the most at risk receiving doses first.

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/astrazeneca-covid-19-vaccines-arrive-034956793.html>

Covid-19: the UK's herd immunity gamble cost lives

'Failures of State: The Inside Story of Britain's Battle with Coronavirus' by Jonathan Calvert and George Arbuthnott is published on March 18. A year ago this week, as the rest of the world was shutting down, 250,000 people converged on Cheltenham races. In an extract from their book, Jonathan Calvert and George Arbuthnott reveal why the event was allowed to go ahead

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/cheltenham-festival-failures-of-state-herd-immunity-coronavirus-gamble-cost-britain-26ln87pv3>

NHS pay rise row: Government accused of 'snatching away NHS pay rise of 2.1%' as union backlash grows

The government has been accused of "snatching away" a previously suggested pay rise of 2.1% for NHS workers, as four major unions expressed their dismay at the 1% increase on offer. NHS Providers, which represents NHS trusts in England, said a long-term plan set out years ago by the government had assumed a pay rise of more than 2% for healthcare workers in 2021/22. The proposed pay rise for this year has been set at 1%, prompting anger from unions and opposition MPs.

<https://news.sky.com/story/nhs-pay-rise-row-government-accused-of-snatching-away-nhs-pay-rise-of-2-1-as-union-backlash-grows-12237291>

China provides COVID-19 vaccines to Arab countries

China provided on Thursday a batch of Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccines to the Arab League general secretariat in Cairo, fulfilling its promise to share the vaccines with other countries. The league's Assistant Secretary-General, Hossam Zaki, expressed his appreciation for China's medical assistance to the pan-Arab body. He said China's medical support will effectively enhance the anti-epidemic capabilities of the Arab world. "The Arab countries are willing to maintain long-term friendly cooperative relations with China and push the Arab-Chinese strategic partnership to a higher level," the AL senior official said.

<http://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202103/06/WS6042be2da31024ad0baad30b.html>

COVID-19 vaccine confidence is growing, global survey suggests

A survey of 14 countries* which ran between November 2020 and February 2021 found that almost 6 in 10 people (58%) would take a vaccine if it was offered to them now and that willingness has risen in 9 of the countries. Led by Imperial College London's Institute of Global Health Innovation (IGHI) in collaboration with YouGov, more than 13,500 people took part in each survey, which has also highlighted major differences in attitudes towards vaccines around the globe.

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/news/216493/covid-19-vaccine-confidence-growing-global-survey/>

China says it aims to vaccinate 40% of population by June

Health experts in China say their country is lagging in its coronavirus vaccination rollout because it has the disease largely under control, but plans to inoculate 40% of its population by June. Zhong Nanshan, the leader of a group of experts attached to the National Health Commission, said the country has delivered 52.52 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines as of Feb. 28. He was speaking Monday at an online forum between U.S and Chinese medical experts hosted by the Brookings Institution and Tsinghua University. The target is the first China has offered publicly since it began its mass immunization campaign for key groups in mid-December.

<https://apnews.com/article/immunizations-coronavirus-pandemic-china-asia-pacific-taiwan-d5f6cfea6060b2a66b2d68b133210cf2>

France, EU back Italy's decision to block Covid-19 vaccine shipment to Australia

Europe's vaccine solidarity got a boost on Friday after France said it could emulate Italy's move to block coronavirus vaccine exports outside the European Union if that's what is needed to enforce the bloc's own contracts with drugs manufacturers. The European Union defended the Italian authorities' decision to stop a large shipment of doses destined for Australia as part of a longstanding feud with drug manufacturer AstraZeneca, and Germany. The EU's executive arm said the decision was not targeting Australia but that it had been taken to ensure that AstraZeneca delivers the number of doses it committed to dispatching to EU countries.

<https://www.france24.com/en/health/20210305-france-eu-back-italy-s-decision-to-block-covid-19-vaccine-shipment-to-australia>

Hungary tightens pandemic restrictions amid rising deaths

Authorities in Hungary are tightening pandemic restrictions in an effort to mitigate a rapid rise in deaths and hospitalizations caused by COVID-19. Businesses will be required to close their doors for two weeks beginning Monday, with only grocery stores, pharmacies and gas stations permitted to remain open. Kindergartens and primary schools will also be closed until April 7. Sporting events may only be held without spectators, and businesses are urged to allow employees to work from home.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/hungary-tightens-pandemic-restrictions-amid-rising-deaths-hungary-covid-budapest-ap-cases-b1812375.html>

Uruguay starts vaccination campaign, last in South America

Uruguay, the last country in South America to receive delivery of coronavirus vaccines, started its inoculation campaign Monday with a focus on teachers, soldiers, police and firefighters. Some 90 vaccination centers countrywide opened their doors to give a first dose of the Chinese CoronaVac shot to some 140,000 essential workers, almost a year to the day since the country recorded its first cases of Covid-19 on March 13. "Today we have the means to confront this scourge," Health Minister Daniel Salinas told reporters, adding that Uruguay had secured orders for all the vaccines necessary to immunize everyone 18 and older in the country of 3.4 million people.

<https://news.yahoo.com/uruguay-starts-vaccination-campaign-last-170052934.html>

Maintaining Services

Asthmatic Scots eligible for Covid-19 vaccine being refused jag, charity warns

In Scotland, patients are being turned away because of the mistaken belief they are only eligible for the covid vaccine if they have recently been hospitalised due to their condition, Asthma UK said. The JCVI priority group six, which is currently being offered vaccines in Scotland, includes people with severe asthma along with those aged 16 to 64 with underlying health conditions. Severe asthma is defined as those who either require regular or repeated steroids to treat their condition, or who have previously been hospitalised. But Asthma UK said some patients had been turned away on the grounds that they have not been hospitalised recently.

https://www.scotsman.com/health/asthmatic-scots-eligible-for-covid-19-vaccine-being-refused-jag-charity-warns-3156588?itm_source=parsely-api

Fast-food workers in LA face unmasked customers and unsafe workplaces, and are punished for speaking up about COVID-19, a damning new report says

Fast-food workers in Los Angeles are facing unsafe conditions at work, and outbreaks among staff at restaurants are threatening the area's ability to recover from the pandemic, a new report says. Fast-food workers in LA County are "especially vulnerable" to COVID-19 community transmission, the report by UCLA and UC Berkeley found. They often face unmasked customers and unsafe workplaces, the groups said. Workers aren't protected when they speak up, and some are even punished, researchers wrote. And the demographics of the fast-food industry means that women and minority workers have been hardest hit.

https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/fast-food-workers-in-la-face-unmasked-customers-and-unsafe-workplaces-and-a-re-punished-for-speaking-up-about-covid-19-a-damning-new-report-says/ar-BB1eczJC?fbclid=IwAR1GDL3Q2nEMNI49qX8862OATkKQaGn6a_cjDECmk6TYTYX-tfpMnsyXMJY

'Not running away': Women fighting on Britain's COVID-19 front line

After a year that has shaken Britain's National Health Service to its core, women working at a hospital in the East Lancashire NHS Trust in England's north-west talk about what the coronavirus crisis has meant to them.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-womens-day-britain-nhs-idUSKBN2AZ04R>

Don't let bureaucracy constrict the supply of Covid-19 vaccines

The U.S. has gained a tremendous amount of knowledge about Covid-19 over the past year. Similarly, over the past few weeks, the scientific community has published encouraging analyses about the vaccines that are playing a starring role in leading us out of this crisis. Mountains of real-world evidence are showing that the two mRNA vaccines authorized by the FDA — the first made by Pfizer and BioNTech, the other by Moderna, both of which are supposed to be administered as a two-dose regimen — will provide substantial protection against Covid-19 even after only one dose. Considering that nearly every state is facing shortfalls in the supply of Covid-19 vaccines, we believe this groundbreaking development can help remedy some of the vaccine supply issues the nation is facing. This new evidence indicates that the second doses currently administered to comply with the FDA's emergency use authorizations could instead be used as initial first doses — essentially doubling the supply. Unfortunately, governors who would like to follow this new evidence and provide protection for more citizens have their hands tied by the emergency use authorizations.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/03/07/bureaucracy-shouldnt-constrict-supplycovid-19-vaccines/>

Hospitals offer holiday and bonuses to Covid-weary staff in England

Hospitals are helping staff recover from the Covid pandemic by giving them extra holiday, bonuses of up to £100, much better food while on duty – and even drama and poetry sessions. NHS trusts across England are also hiring psychologists, expanding childcare and overhauling rest areas as part of a drive to reward staff for their efforts and improve their working lives. The moves by hospitals to

show their staff how much they appreciate them come amid the growing row over the government's plan to restrict the NHS England workforce to a pay rise of just 1%, which critics have called "an insult" and "a slap in the face".

https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/mar/07/hospitals-offer-holiday-bonuses-covid-weary-staff-england-nhs?utm_term=Autofeed&CMP=tw_t_b-gdnnews&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1615143202

Malawi receives first shipment of COVID-19 vaccines from COVAX - Malawi

Malawi received COVID-19 vaccine doses shipped via the COVAX Facility, a partnership between CEPI, Gavi, UNICEF and WHO. This is a historic step towards the goal of COVAX to ensure equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines globally, in what will be the largest vaccine procurement and supply operation in history. The delivery is part of a first wave of arrivals in Africa, and the first tranche of allocations for Malawi that will take place in the coming months and year through the COVAX Facility. The COVAX Facility shipped 360,000 doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine from Serum Institute of India from Mumbai, India, to Lilongwe, Malawi, arriving on the evening of 5 March. The arrival in Lilongwe marks a milestone for Malawi in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic which has claimed over 1000 lives and created a heavy burden on health facilities.

<https://reliefweb.int/report/malawi/malawi-receives-first-shipment-covid-19-vaccines-covax>

Countries urge drug companies to share vaccine know-how

In an industrial neighborhood on the outskirts of Bangladesh's largest city lies a factory with gleaming new equipment imported from Germany, its immaculate hallways lined with hermetically sealed rooms. It is operating at just a quarter of its capacity. It is one of three factories that The Associated Press found on three continents whose owners say they could start producing hundreds of millions of COVID-19 vaccines on short notice if only they had the blueprints and technical know-how. But that knowledge belongs to the large pharmaceutical companies who have produced the first three vaccines authorized by countries including Britain, the European Union and the U.S. — Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca. The factories are all still awaiting responses

<https://apnews.com/article/drug-companies-called-share-vaccine-info-22d92afbc3ea9ed519be007f8887bcf6>

Officials to explore COVID vaccine supply gaps, boosting production

Though deliveries of COVAX vaccine started at a brisk pace this week, with developed countries ramping up their programs, the demand far exceeds the supply, the World Health Organization (WHO) said today. At a briefing today, WHO officials said they and their partners will hold a global summit on Mar 8 and 9 to look at gaps in the supply chain and examine ways to boost production. Also, officials raised concerns about a COVID-19 surge in Brazil, where the P1 variant is dominant.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/03/officials-explore-covid-vaccine-supply-gaps-boosting-production>

U.S. focus on Pfizer production could delay manufacturing of other COVID-19 vaccines, Serum Institute CEO warns

The U.S.' move to lock up raw materials and supplies for Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine could spell trouble for manufacturers working on other shots around the globe. The world's largest vaccine maker by volume, Serum Institute of India, sees bottlenecks ahead, thanks to a U.S. law blocking exports of certain materials needed to produce COVID-19 shots. The World Health Organization has also raised flags about a global shortage of raw materials used to turn out the pandemic vaccines, Bloomberg first reported. In January, the Biden Administration said it would leverage the "full power" of the Defense Production Act to free up supplies for the production of coronavirus shots, including Pfizer's BioNTech-partnered mRNA vaccine Comirnaty.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/manufacturing/u-s-focus-pfizer-production-could-delay-manufacturing-other-covid-19-vaccines-serum>

Czechs seek help abroad to treat their COVID-19 patients

With hospitals in some parts of the Czech Republic filled up, the country has turned to Germany and other European countries with a request for help. The Czech Republic, one of the hardest-hit European Union countries, has been facing a surge of new cases attributed to a highly infectious coronavirus variant that is believed to originate in Britain. Interior Minister Jan Hamacek said on Wednesday neighboring Germany has offered dozens of beds in its hospitals to treat Czech COVID-19 patients. He said 19 of them were immediately ready. Hamacek said that Switzerland was another country ready to help with 20 beds in its hospitals while offering to take care of the transport of the patients.

<https://apnews.com/article/europe-prague-coronavirus-pandemic-czech-republic-germany-df230eac5ede39903a81e956b4a9525>

Healthcare Innovations

You've been vaccinated — the CDC is finalizing guidance on what's safe for you to do

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is finalizing guidance aimed at clarifying what Americans who have received COVID-19 vaccines should and shouldn't do, according to two sources at the agency familiar with its drafting. The upcoming guidance, first reported by Politico, is expected to include that fully vaccinated individuals should be able to gather in small groups with other people who have also been vaccinated. The CDC currently does not recommend in-person gatherings with the general public, saying "gathering virtually or with the people you live with is the safest choice."

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/cdc-covid-vaccine-guidelines-after/>

Exclusive: Oxford study indicates AstraZeneca effective against Brazil variant, source says

Preliminary data from a study conducted at the University of Oxford indicates that the COVID-19 vaccine developed by AstraZeneca PLC is effective against the P1, or Brazilian, variant, a source with knowledge of the study told Reuters on Friday. The data indicates that the vaccine will not need to be modified in order to protect against the variant, which is believed to have originated in the Amazonian city of Manaus, said the source, who requested anonymity as the results have not yet been made public. The source did not provide the exact efficacy of the vaccine against the variant. They said the full results of the study should be released soon, possibly in March.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-brazil-variant-exc/exclusive-oxford-study-indicates-astrazeneca-effective-against-brazil-variant-source-says-idUSKBN2AX1NS>

FDA authorizes new test, built with machine learning, to detect past Covid-19 infections

The Food and Drug Administration on Friday issued an emergency authorization for a new test to detect Covid-19 infections — one that stands apart from the hundreds already authorized. Unlike tests that detect bits of SARS-CoV-2 or antibodies to it, the new test, called T-Detect COVID, looks for signals of past infections in the body's adaptive immune system — in particular, the T cells that help the body remember what its viral enemies look like. Developed by Seattle-based Adaptive Biotechnologies, it is the first test of its kind. Adaptive's approach involves mapping antigens to their matching receptors on the surface of T cells. They and other researchers had already shown that the cast of T cells floating around in an individual's blood reflects the diseases they've encountered, in many cases years later. The next step is trying to unlock that information to help diagnose those past infections.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/03/05/adapative-biotechnologies-covid19-test-microsoft/>

Coronavirus: will immunity rapidly fade or last a lifetime?

The COVID vaccines are working. Data from Israel and Scotland shows that they are protecting people and may also be decreasing the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. If it all holds up, people will be protected from severe disease, the amount of virus will progressively decrease, and we can truly

plan for a way out of the pandemic. Evidence is also growing that once you've been infected, there is a pretty good chance that you will be protected from further infections, or at the very least, have less severe disease. This makes sense, as it's why your immune system evolved in the first place. However, an important question in immunology, when it comes to infectious diseases and vaccines, is: how long protection might last? There are several variables here, from the type of pathogen infecting you, to how bad the initial disease is, to your overall health, and your age. All of this makes predicting what might happen with COVID challenging.

<https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-will-immunity-rapidly-fade-or-last-a-lifetime-155905>

Understanding the spectrum of vaccine efficacy measures

Phase III covid-19 vaccine efficacy trials have returned encouraging results, exceeding the 50% efficacy threshold specified by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Multiple vaccines are now available for use. These phase III trials address the central question of a vaccine's effect on a meaningful clinical outcome. In nearly all of the trials, the primary aim is to measure efficacy against laboratory confirmed symptomatic disease, including mild symptoms. But this is not the only endpoint that policy makers and individuals care about when making decisions. In fact, we can think about it as one measure of vaccine efficacy that lies alongside others on a spectrum.

<https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2021/03/05/understanding-the-spectrum-of-vaccine-efficacy-measures/>

Canada vaccine panel recommends 4 months between COVID doses

A national panel of vaccine experts in Canada recommended Wednesday that provinces extend the interval between the two doses of a COVID-19 shot to four months to quickly inoculate more people amid a shortage of doses in Canada. A number of provinces said they would do just that. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau also expressed optimism that vaccination timelines could be sped up. And Health Canada, the country's regulator, said emerging evidence suggests high effectiveness for several weeks after the first dose and noted the panel's recommendation in a tweet. But two top health officials called it an experiment.

<https://apnews.com/article/canada-vaccine-panel-4-months-between-doses-b0ad463c2ec1b2ac2c28e0618db33671>