

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

11th Jan 2021

News Highlights

Covid spread enabled by vaccine 'hoarding,' WHO DG implies

The World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has warned that ['vaccine nationalism hurts us all and is self-defeating.'](#) he noted that the majority of countries rolling out vaccination campaigns against Covid-19 are high-income nations, at the expense of low and middle-income countries. 'Vaccinating saves lives, stabilises health systems and would lead to a truly global recovery that stimulates job creation,' he said.

Another new Covid-19 variant in the U.S? 'perhaps'

A member of the White House Covid-19 task force has speculated that a new variant of Covid-19 may be circulating in the United States (Dr Birx). The acceleration of cases during the autumn and winter compared to previous surges ['suggest there may be a USA variant that has evolved here, in addition to the UK variant that is already spreading in our communities and \[may be\] fifty percent more transmissible.'](#) she implied. Regardless, experts are suggesting that more aggressive health prevention measures should be scaled up to support the vaccine rollout.

Symptoms remain in many patients six months after infection

More than three-quarters of hospitalised Covid-19 patients display at least one symptom of the disease six months post infection, according to recent research published in The Lancet. [The study of patients in Wuhan, China, found that fatigue or muscle weakness are the most common persistent symptoms,](#) found in 63% of those studied. Those severely ill displayed lasting damage to their lung function and abnormalities in their chest imaging - an indicator of potential organ damage.

Moderna vaccine wins UK approval

The Moderna vaccine candidate has secured approval from UK regulators - the third to do so - having shown 94% efficacy in late-stage trials. Seven million doses have already been ordered, with ten million to follow. [Health Secretary Matt Hancock welcomed the move, calling it 'another weapon in our arsenal.'](#) The vaccine is soon expected to become available in the UK.

Lockdown Exit

WHO warns countries are helping Covid thrive through inequitable vaccine distribution

The coronavirus will continue to thrive if there isn't a more equitable distribution of vaccines across the globe, the head of the World Health Organization said on Friday. There are 42 countries that are now rolling out their initial doses of Covid-19 vaccines, and a majority of them are high-income nations, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said. No low-income countries have started their vaccine programs, he said, which is "a clear problem."

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/08/who-warns-inequitable-vaccine-distribution-helps-covid-thrive.html>

Thanks to deep pockets, Germany snaps up extra coronavirus jabs

When it comes to EU vaccine solidarity, Germany is looking to have its cake and eat it, too. While

Berlin championed the bloc's joint purchasing of coronavirus vaccines while holding the European Union's rotating presidency in the second half of 2020, it simultaneously made additional agreements with vaccine producers — including BioNTech/Pfizer and CureVac — for extra doses. And it's now purchasing additional vaccines other EU countries didn't want. Germany, a country of 83 million people, said it's getting 94 million doses of the BioNTech/Pfizer vaccine, 64 million from the EU and 30 million from a separate bilateral deal. On top of that, Berlin will buy doses that other countries don't buy, securing 50 million of 160 million Moderna doses — far more than its pro-rata allocation.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/germany-buys-extra-coronavirus-vaccine-doses-from-eu-countries/>

Lockdown 3.0: an opportunity to join up thinking

As we embark on what may be the very early stages of Lockdown 3.0, our fears for the future are made darker both by a real uncertainty about the course of the next few months and by the knowledge that it did not have to be like this. It is tempting to attribute such comment to hindsight, but in fact we have been led by a government which has egregiously disregarded what is actually little more than common sense. A health emergency of this potential scale required a strategic and systems-based approach from the start. This approach should have led early on to the production of a coherent plan with clear purpose. It should throughout have shown itself nimble to adapt in real time to new circumstances and to new knowledge.

<https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2021/01/08/lockdown-3-0-an-opportunity-to-join-up-thinking/>

North Wales Police Federation rep says officers should get Covid vaccine 'as a priority'

A North Wales Police Federation rep has said officers should get the Covid vaccine as a priority. More than 9,000 people have signed a petition calling on the Welsh Government to change the fact that police are not on the priority list to be immunised for Covid-19. Police forces across the UK are currently experiencing high sickness rates as officers face a greater risk of contracting the virus due to the public facing nature of their jobs. Mark Jones, general secretary of the North Wales Police Federation, said his colleagues had even been spat at by offenders, raising the potential for them to catch the coronavirus even further.

<http://www.deeside.com/north-wales-police-federation-rep-says-officers-should-get-covid-vaccine-as-a-priority/>

Biden to reverse Trump policy by speeding release of Covid-19 vaccines

US president-elect Joe Biden will rapidly release most available coronavirus vaccine doses to protect more people, his office has said, in a reversal of Trump administration policies.

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/world-news/biden-to-reverse-trump-policy-by-speeding-release-of-covid-19-vaccines-39949772.html>

Biden plans to release available COVID-19 vaccines instead of holding back for second doses

Biden's transition team said Friday that it doesn't make sense to hold back vaccine at a time when more American's are dying than at any point in the pandemic. Instead, they want to get shots into more arms, then follow up with second doses later. "The president-elect believes we must accelerate distribution of the vaccine while continuing to ensure the Americans who need it most get it as soon as possible," spokesman T.J. Ducklo said in a statement sent to USA TODAY. Biden "supports releasing available doses immediately, and believes the government should stop holding back vaccine supply so we can get more shots in Americans' arms now."

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/health/2021/01/08/covid-biden-plans-release-all-vaccines-not-hold-second-dose/6596334002/>

Exit Strategies

Rapid Covid testing across England will help identify symptomless carriers

Rapid testing to find symptomless carriers of Covid-19 is to be launched in England this week. The aim of the programme is to identify some of the tens of thousands of infected people who are unwittingly spreading the virus across the country. The dramatic escalation of the programme – which uses detectors known as lateral flow devices – comes as Covid death rates have continued to soar and hospitals have reported alarming numbers of patients needing intensive care.

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/10/rapid-covid-testing-across-england-will-help-identify-symptomless-carriers?utm_term=Autofeed&CMP=tw_t_gu&utm_medium&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1610261462

Coronavirus: UK has “no clear strategy” to alleviate Covid pressure on hospitals beyond lockdowns says expert

The UK has “no clear strategy” to alleviate pressure on hospitals battling coronavirus beyond “reactive lockdowns”, a public health expert has said. The country has seen some form of restrictions placed on the population for almost a year, said Professor Devi Sridhar, adding that it is “unrealistic” to expect people to adhere to rules for months on end. The chairwoman of public health at Edinburgh University told Times Radio: “I think the larger issue here is the UK has no clear strategy beyond reactive lockdowns whenever hospitals are under pressure.

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/19000273.coronavirus-uk-no-clear-strategy-alleviate-covid-pressure-hospitals-beyond-lockdowns-says-expert/>

Biden Plans Coronavirus Vaccination Blitz After Inauguration

In a sharp break with the Trump administration, President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr. intends to release nearly all available doses of the coronavirus vaccine soon after he is inaugurated, rather than hold back millions of vials to guarantee second doses will be available. The decision is part of an aggressive effort to “to ensure the Americans who need it most get it as soon as possible,” the Biden transition team said on Friday. The vaccination plan, to be formally unveiled next week, also will include federally run vaccination sites in places like high school gyms and sports stadiums, and mobile units to reach high-risk populations.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/08/us/politics/biden-coronavirus-vaccinations.html>

Nurse catches Covid three weeks after getting Pfizer vaccine

A nurse in Wales caught Covid three weeks after getting the vaccine, prompting warnings from experts that it takes time for immunity to build up. The nurse, who has been working for the Hywel Dda University Health Board area, said that she contracted the virus while waiting for the second dose of the Pfizer-BioNtech jab. Deputy Chief Executive of Hywel Dda health board, Dr Philip Kloer, said that while a Covid vaccine ‘reduces your chance of suffering’ from the virus, no vaccine is ever 100% effective.

<https://metro.co.uk/2021/01/09/nurse-catches-covid-three-weeks-after-getting-pfizer-vaccine-13875410/>

Second doses of first coronavirus vaccine happening now

As states try to broaden the reach of their coronavirus vaccination campaigns and navigate uncertain supply chains, many of the first people to receive their shots are just now completing the final act of immunity, the second dose, which boosts the efficacy of both available US vaccines to about 95 percent. Many health care workers and others at high risk who had the Pfizer shots in mid December lined up for their “booster” shot this week, due to be given 21 days after the initial dose.

<https://www.npr.org/2021/01/09/954970455/injections-of-second-coronavirus-vaccine-doses-have-begun>

Coronavirus: Company's apology after £5,000 vaccine offer

In England, a property investment company has offered GP surgeries £5,000 for unused coronavirus vaccine doses. The Hacking Trust's medical division approached surgeries in Bristol and Worthing offering to pay the money to charity “or the staff member directly”. Robyn Clark, from the Institute of General Practice Management, said it was “just appalling”. The company, based in London, has apologised, saying its “good intentions” were “misinterpreted”. NHS England said people “will rightly

take a dim view of anyone who tries to jump the queue".

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-55593210>

COVID-19: UK approves use of Moderna's coronavirus vaccine and orders 10 million more doses

The Moderna vaccine has become the third coronavirus jab to be approved for use in the UK - with an additional 10 million doses ordered. The US-based company's vaccine was shown to have 94% efficacy against COVID-19 in final trials. Seven million doses had already been ordered by the UK government with a further 10 million expected to follow - but it will likely not become available until March.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-uk-approves-use-of-modernas-coronavirus-vaccine-12150649>

WHO director calls for easing of vaccine hurdles for developing nations

The World Health Organization's (WHO's) director-general today called on vaccine makers and countries to take steps to ensure that low- and middle-income countries aren't shut out of receiving vaccine supply. The move comes amid news of a European Union deal with Pfizer, announced by the European Commission today, that would give countries in the region nearly half of the company's COVID-19 vaccine output for 2021. At a WHO briefing, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, PhD, the agency's director-general, said the WHO-led COVAX initiative has contracts to secure 2 billion doses and the right of first refusal for 1 billion more.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/who-director-calls-easing-vaccine-hurdles-developing-nations>

Queen and Prince Philip get Covid vaccine at Windsor Castle

In England, the Queen and Prince Philip have both received the first dose of Covid-19 vaccinations, Buckingham Palace has confirmed. The royal couple were given the jab by a doctor from the Royal Household at Windsor Castle, where they are both isolating. The Queen, 94, and the Duke of Edinburgh, 99, both meet the Government age guidelines for those who should be given the vaccine. Some 1.3 million people in the UK have now received their first dose of a Covid vaccine, according to the government.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/queen-prince-philip-covid-coronavirus-vaccine-b784541.html>

NHS England plans to vaccinate all frontline staff against COVID-19 in next few weeks

NHS England said on Friday it had made plans to vaccinate all frontline staff against COVID-19 in the next few weeks following the rollout of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine. Nikita Kanani, the Nation Health Service medical director for primary care, said the vaccine will be administered to "all health and social care staff" by mid-February.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-britain-nhs/nhs-england-plans-to-vaccinate-all-frontline-staff-against-covid-19-in-next-few-weeks-idUSL4N2JK032>

What the US can do to speed up vaccine distribution

The US set a new daily record for Covid-19 deaths on Jan. 6, reporting the loss of 3,963 lives. So where are the vaccines? Thus far, the rollout of doses from Pfizer and Moderna has been underwhelming. The US set a goal of vaccinating 20 million people in December 2020, but by Jan. 7 the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that only 5.3 million first doses had been injected, and only about 17 million doses have been sent to states. The slow pace means it will take longer to bring the pandemic under control, increasing both the human and economic toll of this crisis. The problem appears to be government dysfunction—specifically, an unfulfilled need for support from the federal government to the state agencies and local healthcare providers tasked with distributing the vaccine. To reach safe levels of immunity in the US by May would require providing 1.8 million doses every single day after Jan. 15, according to a letter (pdf) the American Hospital Association (AHA) sent to Health and Human Services secretary Alex Azar today.

<https://qz.com/1954226/what-the-us-can-do-to-speed-up-vaccine-distribution/>

Over 9 million COVID-19 vaccine shots given in China, health officials say

China has administered over 9 million shots of COVID-19 vaccine since Dec 15 to people deemed at high risk of contracting the disease, senior health officials said on Saturday. As vaccine production ramps up,

<http://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202101/09/WS5ff92b67a31024ad0baa1846.html>

DGCA issues guidelines for Airlines to transport COVID-19 vaccines

India's civil aviation regulator, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), has issued guidelines to airlines and other aircraft operators for transportation of Covid-19 vaccines. "All scheduled operators who have been currently authorized to carry dangerous goods may carry COVID19 vaccine packed in dry ice, meeting the regulatory requirements," DGCA said in a circular. "Non-scheduled operators, including aircraft engaged in general aviation, that are required to participate in the carriage of COVID 19 vaccines packed in dry ice shall seek specific approval before commencing such operations," it added. Covid-19 vaccination in India is expected to start in the next few days, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said yesterday, adding that the union government has requested the stakeholders in the process to help in its smooth rollout.

<http://www.ddinews.gov.in/national/dgca-issues-guidelines-airlines-transport-covid-19-vaccines>

Israel's Covid vaccine rollout is the fastest in the world — here are some lessons for the rest of us

While the U.S. and Europe attempt to ramp up their own Covid vaccination drives, Israel is outpacing them all. Israel's vaccination drive began on Dec. 19, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu the first person to be vaccinated in the country. Priority has been given to people aged over 60, health care workers and anyone clinically vulnerable — reported to make up around a quarter of its 9 million population.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/07/israels-covid-vaccine-rollout-is-the-fastest-in-the-world.html>

First Minister advises people to be 'cautious' even after having Covid vaccine

The coronavirus vaccine roll-out is well under way right across the UK which offers a 'brighter future' for 2021. However the UK finds itself under lockdown rules, with First Minister Mark Drakeford extending restrictions in Wales for a further three-weeks. At the Welsh Government press conference on January 8, he told the nation that the vaccine roll-out is under way and he 'shares' the Prime Ministers ambitions of vaccinating the top four priority groups by mid-February. However stressed this is dependant on the programme and vaccine supplies.

<https://www.leaderlive.co.uk/news/18997681.first-minister-advises-people-cautious-even-covid-vaccine/>

Some school staff will be prioritised for coronavirus vaccine

Special school staff, and those working in colleges providing intimate care, as well as at risk staff will be prioritised for the coronavirus vaccine along with care workers. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) which advises UK health departments on immunisation, agreed certain special school staff should be classed as care workers and that at risk school and college staff should also be prioritised. Headteachers, including Chris Britten, head of Ysgol y Deri special school in Penarth, have been pressing for school staff to be prioritised after health workers and vulnerable groups.

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/education/vaccine-coronavirus-schools-wales-teachers-19591422>

Biden's plan to end policy of keeping Covid vaccine doses in reserve is the first step in a difficult journey

The transition team of President-elect Biden has taken its first step to reexamine the distribution of Covid-19 vaccines put in place by the Trump administration. Instead of keeping half the doses in reserve to make sure that every person who received their first dose can receive their second dose, the transition said Friday that it would release the vast majority of available doses of authorized

vaccines at once. It's a great start. But it is also only a start. The argument to hold back the second dose was not without merit at a time of limited supply of the vaccines, developed by Pfizer and its partner BioNTech, as well as Moderna. The fear has been that, without sufficient doses in reserve, there would be mayhem, with some sites keeping doses in reserve themselves and recipients becoming upset if their second dose was not available.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/01/08/bidens-plan-to-end-policy-of-keeping-covid-vaccine-doses-in-reserve-is-the-first-step-in-a-more-difficult-journey/>

Partisan Exits

Johnson under fire as UK again faces onslaught of COVID-19

The crisis facing Britain this winter is depressingly familiar: Stay-at-home orders and empty streets. Hospitals overflowing. A daily toll of many hundreds of coronavirus deaths. The U.K. is the epicenter of Europe's COVID-19 outbreak once more, and Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative government is facing questions, and anger, as people demand to know how the country has ended up here — again. Many countries are enduring new waves of the virus, but Britain's is among the worst, and it comes after a horrendous 2020. More than 3 million people in the U.K. have tested positive for the coronavirus and 81,000 have died — 30,000 in just the last 30 days. The economy has shrunk by 8%, more than 800,000 jobs have been lost and hundreds of thousands more furloughed workers are in limbo.

<https://apnews.com/article/europe-coronavirus-pandemic-sadiq-khan-london-boris-johnson-9f45538038d470952d70bcc093193384>

Covid-19: US cases surge but vaccine distribution is slow

Cases of covid-19 have continued to surge in the US as only five million people were vaccinated by the end of 2020, against the 20 million promised by President Donald Trump. President Elect Joe Biden has promised to deliver 100 million doses of the vaccine in his first 100 days in office, which will begin on 20 January. There is no national plan for distributing vaccines. Each state is allotted doses based on their populations and leaders must then decide how to get the vaccines to its people. Francis Collins, head of the National Institutes of Health, said in a live streamed interview with the Washington Post on 6 January that it had been "a rocky beginning" but that he hoped to see a million people being vaccinated every day.¹ Collins is the boss of Anthony Fauci, head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and a frequently quoted expert on covid-19. Collins was asked about suggestions that only the first dose of the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine be given or that half doses of the Moderna vaccine be used. He said that the two dose regimen of both vaccines was 94% to 95% effective, which he called a "breath taking" success, and that was what should be used.

<https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n42>

Saudi king receives first dose of a coronavirus vaccine -SPA

Saudi King Salman received a first dose of a coronavirus vaccine on Friday in the NEOM economic zone, the state news agency SPA said. The agency posted two pictures and a short video that showed a medical staff injecting the king with the vaccine.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-saudi-king/saudi-king-receives-first-dose-of-a-coronavirus-vaccine-spa-idUSKBN29D2PM>

Frontline community nurses claim they've been beaten to the Covid vaccine by home-working bosses

Frontline community nurses have claimed home-working bosses are being vaccinated for coronavirus while they continue to wait for their jabs. One East Dunbartonshire nurse said she was furious that superiors in non patient facing roles had "jumped the queue" while she works in fear visiting several patients a day. The whistleblower, who did not want to be named, said staff had

raised concern with management over the length of time they were waiting to be vaccinated, only to find out bosses at the Kirkintilloch Health and Care Centre had already been seen.

<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/frontline-community-nurses-claim-theyve-23287124>

Covid: The challenge in speeding up France's vaccination drive

France has said that everyone over 75 will be able to have the coronavirus vaccine from 18 January, as part of a plan to speed up vaccinations. The French Prime Minister, Jean Castex, said the government had been right to prioritise the most vulnerable, but admitted that France had lagged behind other countries in rolling out its vaccination programme. The first vaccines were restricted to elderly care home residents, and required a signed consent form and a doctor's consultation before they could be administered. But the government has faced a storm of criticism after it emerged that only 500 people had been vaccinated in the first week of the roll-out, compared to 200,000 in Germany.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-55547518>

Scientists 'not sure' if Covid vaccine will beat South African strain, top Tory says

Despite positive news on the Pfizer jab, Grant Shapps warned the 501Y.V2 variant was the reason for him finally introducing pre-flight tests - and it'll be a 'tragedy' if it gets to the UK.

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/scientists-not-sure-covid-vaccine-23282862>

Hospital group presses Trump administration for ongoing federal help with vaccine distribution

Richard Pollack, CEO of the American Hospital Association, said in a letter to HHS Secretary Alex Azar that the slow initial rollout of the vaccine has cast doubt on the nation's vaccination goals. Unforeseen issues have emerged in the first weeks of the rollout, he added, calling on Azar to provide more help. "As this rollout rapidly evolves, it is absolutely critical that effective situational, real-time leadership is provided nationally," he wrote in the letter.

<https://www.cnbc.com/2021/01/07/hospital-group-presses-hhs-to-ership-in-covid-vaccine-rollout.html>

Continued Lockdown

Greece extends some COVID lockdown curbs until Jan. 18

Health authorities reported 721 new COVID-19 cases on Friday and 49 related deaths, bringing the respective totals since the first coronavirus case was detected in February last year to 143,494 and 5,195. Greece earlier extended restrictions on international travellers arriving in Greece by two weeks.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-greece/greece-extends-some-covid-lockdown-curbs-until-jan-18-idUSKBN29D1GK>

COVID-19 In Butler County: Hospitals Adjusting On Fly After State Announces New Vaccine Distribution Plan

This is the fourth version of the COVID-19 vaccine distribution plan in Pennsylvania. While things change, local health systems are rolling with the punches. "Many people are ready, many people perceive their risk. They've been riding this out for a long time and have been careful for a long time," said Dr. David Rottinghaus, the chief medical officer at Butler Health System. Dr. Rottinghaus said Butler Health System was tasked with vaccinating the county's 1A Phase. "We distributed almost 1,000 in the last 3 days. We are pretty far down the road in tier 1A," Rottinghaus said.

<https://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2021/01/08/hospitals-adjusting-on-fly-after-state-announces-new-vaccine-distribution-plan/>

Coronavirus digest: London declares major incident over soaring cases

In Britain, London mayor Sadiq Khan has declared a major incident, warning that hospitals across the capital could struggle to cope with new infections linked to a new strain. "The stark reality is that

we will run out of beds for patients in the next couple of weeks unless the spread of the virus slows down drastically," Khan said in a statement, calling for more support and action from the central UK government. "We are declaring a major incident because the threat this virus poses to our city is at crisis point." The number of patients in the capital's hospitals has grown by 27% in the last week and the number on ventilators has increased by 42%. Britain on Friday reported 1,325 new deaths from the coronavirus — its highest daily tally since the pandemic began. The last record of 1,224 was reported in April.

<https://www.dw.com/en/coronavirus-digest-london-declares-major-incident-over-soaring-cases/a-56166343>

Hotel quarantine overhaul in light of UK COVID-19 in Australia

A nationwide hotel quarantine overhaul is underway after confirmation the new - more contagious - variants of COVID-19 have made their way into our communities. Saturday January 9: Victoria has recorded one new COVID-19 case in hotel quarantine overnight,

<https://www.9news.com.au/videos/health/hotel-quarantine-overhaul-in-light-of-uk-covid-19-in-australia/ckjpel327001s0hmpaxt2nu6o>

Scientific Viewpoint

Hong Kong fourth wave: sewage tests for coronavirus to be expanded, aim for 'gold standard'

Pilot scheme by HKU experts helped uncover nine infections in two blocks. Mandatory testing will be triggered if sewage checks reveal two consecutive positive results or two positives over three days

https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/health-environment/article/3117041/hong-kong-fourth-wave-sewage-tests-coronavirus-be?utm_term=Autofeed&utm_medium=Social&utm_content=article&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1610239640

New mutant strain of coronavirus is discovered in Japan

Unseen strain found in Japan after plane passengers tested positive. Four men and women, in their teens to 40s, were found to have the new strain. They had arrived at Haneda Airport in Tokyo from Brazil on Saturday, January 2. Japan's health and welfare department has reported the new discovery to WHO

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9131745/New-mutant-strain-coronavirus-discovered-Japan.html>

Jordan approves emergency use of China's Sinopharm coronavirus vaccine

The country hopes to start its vaccination campaign in the coming days, with around 200,000 people having registered for inoculation. China's Sinopharm says its vaccine is 79 per cent effective

<https://www.scmp.com/news/world/middle-east/article/3117084/jordan-approves-emergency-use-chinas-sinopharm-coronavirus>

WHO-led COVAX initiative secures contracts of 2 bln doses of COVID-19 vaccines: Tedros

COVAX, an international initiative for COVID-19 vaccines led by the World Health Organization (WHO), has secured contracts of 2 billion doses of vaccines, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Friday.

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/world/2021/01/09/who-led-covax-initiative-secures-contracts-of-2-bln-doses-of-covid-19-vaccines-tedros>

Meet the Black female scientist at the forefront of COVID-19 vaccine development

When President Donald Trump paid a visit to the National Institutes of Health last March, the leads at the vaccine research center explained their life-saving mission. The key to that mission was a 34-year-old doctor named Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett. "I was just there telling the task force about the work that we've been doing," Corbett told "CBS This Morning: Saturday" co-host Michelle Miller. Two weeks after the visit, Corbett's team began the first stage of clinical trials. She said they took a lot of the knowledge they have gained in the last six years and applied it to a vaccine platform in

collaboration with Moderna. The vaccine rolled out 10 months later. "The vaccine teaches the body how to fend off a virus, because it teaches the body how to look for the virus by basically just showing the body the spike protein of the virus" she explained. "The body then says 'Oh, we've seen this protein before. Let's go fight against it.' That's how it works."

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/covid-19-vaccine-development-kizzmekia-corbett/>

Covid-19: Breastfeeding women can have vaccine after guidance turnaround

The UK's Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has revised its guidance so that pregnant and breastfeeding women can receive the covid-19 vaccine. Writing in BMJ Opinion, Helen Hare, an acute medicine trainee, and Kate Womersley, an academic foundation trainee, said that the change had come after strong pressure from campaigners, clinicians, and some of the women affected. The MHRA had previously recommended that breastfeeding women should not be given the vaccine, which Hare and Womersley said had been interpreted by NHS trusts as a blanket ban. But on 30 December the agency said that women who were breastfeeding could be given both the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine

<https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n64>

As Coronavirus Mutates, the World Stumbles Again to Respond

Doctors and nurses at a South African hospital group noticed an odd spike in the number of Covid-19 patients in their wards in late October. The government had slackened its lockdown grip, and springtime had brought more parties. But the numbers were growing too quickly to easily explain, prompting a distressing question. "Is this a different strain?" one hospital official asked in a group email in early November, raising the possibility that the virus had developed a dangerous mutation. That question touched off a high-stakes genetic investigation that began here in Durban on the Indian Ocean, tipped off researchers in Britain and is now taking place around the world. Scientists have discovered worrisome new variants of the virus, leading to border closures, quarantines and lockdowns, and dousing some of the enthusiasm that arrived with the vaccines.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/09/world/europe/coronavirus-mutations.html>

Another COVID-19 strain? White House warns of 'USA variant' of coronavirus

The White House task force for coronavirus has warned of a USA variant of COVID-19 that could be fuelling the already aggressive spread of the virus. This variant, the task force pointed out, is separate from the UK coronavirus variant that is touted to be 70 per cent more transmissible. According to CNN, reports sent by the task force warn of a possibility of a 'USA variant' of the coronavirus. "This fall/winter surge has been at nearly twice the rate of rise of cases as the spring and summer surges. This acceleration suggests there may be a USA variant that has evolved here, in addition to the UK variant that is already spreading in our communities and maybe 50 per cent more transmissible," said the report.

<https://www.businesstoday.in/current/economy-politics/another-covid-19-strain-white-house-warns-of-usa-variant-of-coronavirus/story/427443.html>

China to provide COVID-19 vaccines free of charge

China will provide COVID-19 vaccines free of charge once they become available to the general public, government authorities said on Saturday. National Health Commission official Zheng Zhongwei said that while manufacturing and transport of vaccines have costs, the government can provide vaccines for free to individuals.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1381494/china-to-provide-covid-19-vaccines-free-of-charge>

Third covid vaccine approved for use in UK after regulator decision

A third vaccine has been approved for use in the UK. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency has approved the Moderna coronavirus vaccine, the Department for Health has announced. The Government has ordered 17 million doses of the Moderna jab, but supplies will not

delivered until the spring. Health Secretary Matt Hancock said: "This is further great news and another weapon in our arsenal to tame this awful disease. "We have already vaccinated nearly 1.5 million people across the UK and Moderna's vaccine will allow us to accelerate our vaccination programme even further once doses become available from the spring.

<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/third-covid-vaccine-approved-use-23284221>

Oxford/AstraZeneca to submit coronavirus vaccine for EU approval next week

The University of Oxford/AstraZeneca will submit their jointly-produced coronavirus vaccine to the European Medicines Agency next week — with a decision on approval for use across the bloc expected by the end of January. The EMA already has the drug-makers' phase 3 data as part of a rolling review, but the vaccine producers are yet to hand a formal submission for conditional marketing authorization from the EU regulator. "Possible conclusion — end of [January], depending on data and evaluation progress," the agency tweeted. The Commission would need to rubber stamp a recommendation from the EMA.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/oxford-astrazeneca-to-submit-application-for-coronavirus-vaccine-approval-in-eu-next-week/>

SAGE warns people must still wear masks AFTER getting Covid vaccine

SPI-B, a sub-group of SAGE, warned some people would stop obeying rules. They said it was crucial that Government told people to continue to be strict. There is no proof that the vaccine will stop people from spreading the virus. Trials only looked at whether the jabs could prevent severe Covid-19

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9126855/People-social-distancing-wearing-masks-getting-Covid-vaccine.html>

'Care needed' after getting Covid vaccine

People who have had Covid vaccines are being warned to still take care. Vaccination has been shown to prevent severe infection, so even if people do catch the virus, they would be protected from getting seriously ill. The call comes as an NHS nurse working for the Hywel Dda University Health Board area said she contracted Covid-19 while waiting for her second dose. The health board said while the vaccine "reduces your chance of suffering", "no vaccine is 100% effective". The Pfizer-BioNtech vaccine, which started being rolled out in the UK last month, offers up to 95% protection against Covid-19 after a second dose.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-55579028>

Cuba to collaborate with Iran on coronavirus vaccine

Communist-run Cuba said late on Friday it had signed an accord with Iran to transfer the technology for its most advanced coronavirus vaccine candidate and carry out last-stage clinical trials of the shot in the Islamic Republic. The allies are both under fierce U.S. sanctions that exempt medicine yet often put foreign pharmaceutical companies off trading with them and as such they seek to be self-reliant. Both are also strapped for cash. Iran launched human trials of its first domestic COVID-19 vaccine candidate late last month, while Cuba has four candidates currently in human trials. Once its most advanced candidate, Soberana (Sovereign) 2, has completed Phase II trials which started on Dec. 22, it will be tested in Phase III trials in around 150,000 people in Havana, officials have said.

<https://ottawasun.com/news/world/cuba-to-collaborate-with-iran-on-coronavirus-vaccine/wcm/49f818be-972e-46fd-8dec-8ea6d0b71384/amp/>

China's COVID-19 vaccine found capable of neutralizing UK strain

China's COVID-19 vaccine is found capable of neutralizing the new strain of the novel coronavirus that was reported to be behind the rise in transmission of the disease in parts of the United Kingdom, senior health official said on Saturday. Zeng Yixin, vice-minister of the National Health

Commission, said China's scientific community is paying close attention to the new variant and its effect on current vaccines as reports indicated that the new strain had arrived in China via imported cases. Scientists from the Institute of Laboratory Animal Sciences of the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences and the Sun Yat-sen University in Guangdong province are already working on the issue, Zeng said during a news briefing held by the State Council Information Office.

<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202101/09/WS5ff9340ca31024ad0baa184d.html>

Most patients hospitalised with COVID-19 have at least 1 symptom 6 months after falling ill: Wuhan study

More than three quarters of COVID-19 patients have at least one ongoing symptom six months after initially becoming unwell, according to research published in *The Lancet*. The cohort study, looking at long-term effects of COVID-19 infection on people hospitalised in Wuhan, China, reveals that the most common symptom to persist is fatigue or muscle weakness (63% of patients), with patients also frequently experiencing sleep difficulties (26%). Anxiety or depression was reported among 23% of patients.

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-01-patients-hospitalised-covid-symptom-months.html>

Scientists create first computational model of entire virus responsible for COVID-19

Researchers at the University of Chicago have created the first usable computational model of the entire virus responsible for COVID-19—and they are making this model widely available to help advance research during the pandemic. "If you can understand how a virus works, that's the first step towards stopping it," said Prof. Gregory Voth, whose team created the model published in *Biophysical Journal*. "Each thing you know about the virus's life cycle and composition is a vulnerability point where you can hit it."

<https://phys.org/news/2021-01-scientists-entire-virus-responsible-covid-.html>

Three studies highlight low COVID risk of in-person school

In the first study, published today in *Pediatrics*, a team led by researchers at Duke University traced contacts of North Carolina students infected with COVID-19 in 11 school districts in the first 9 weeks of in-person instruction in the fall. In August 2020, 56 of 115 North Carolina school districts joined the ABC Science Collaborative to put in place specific public health measures to prevent COVID-19 transmission and share what they learn in the process. Superintendents reported primary and secondary cases by school and week of the quarter. The collaborative was developed by faculty at Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/three-studies-highlight-low-covid-risk-person-school>

mRNA latecomer CureVac recruits Bayer to speed COVID-19 vaccine to market

Compared with Moderna and the Pfizer-BioNTech partnership, which already have their COVID-19 vaccines authorized for emergency use, CureVac seems a little late to the mRNA race. But now, the biotech has signed a Big Pharma teammate to help accelerate development, boost manufacturing and prep for a possible launch. CureVac partnered up with German compatriot Bayer on its COVID-19 vaccine, CVnCOV, which just entered phase 3 testing three weeks ago. No financial details were provided. The two companies aim to leverage Bayer's expertise and operations to supply "hundreds of millions" doses of the mRNA shot once it's approved. Along the way, Bayer will help with clinical development, manufacturing, regulatory affairs and commercialization.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/vaccines/mrna-latecomer-curevac-finds-bayer-as-covid-19-vaccine-partner>

Pfizer, BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine works in more contagious coronavirus variants: study

Newly emerged variants of the novel coronavirus have sparked a key question: Will existing COVID-19 vaccines be less effective against them? But scientists have preliminary data showing that may not be the case, at least for Pfizer and BioNTech's shot. Researchers from the University of Texas and Pfizer found that, in lab dishes, the vaccine was able to neutralize an engineered version

of a variant, which bears an N501Y mutation in its spike protein. The finding was published in bioRxiv and hasn't been peer-reviewed. Variants of coronavirus with this mutation were first discovered in the U.K. and South Africa and immediately grabbed global attention because they are more contagious.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/pfizer-biontech-covid-19-vaccine-works-more-contagious-coronavirus-variants-study>

Roche's Actemra, Regeneron's Kevzara win U.K.'s favor in COVID-19 after study shows 24% drop in death risk

The question of whether seriously ill COVID-19 patients can benefit from anti-inflammatories like Roche's Actemra and Sanofi and Regeneron's Kevzara has dogged practitioners in the United States thanks to conflicting clinical trial results. The United Kingdom, on the other hand, has reached a definitive answer on the two drugs, both of which are IL-6 inhibitors: They significantly reduce the risk of death in COVID-19 patients needing intensive care, and they should be used to ease the pressure hospitals are now facing as the coronavirus pandemic continues to intensify, the country's National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) said Thursday. The recommendation came after data from an NIHR-sponsored study showed that Actemra and Kevzara can cut hospital stays for COVID-19 patients admitted to intensive care by 10 days and can lower the risk of death by 24% in patients who receive either drug within a day of admission. That finding prompted the U.K. government to recommend to the National Health Service (NHS) that IL-6 inhibitors be rolled out for the treatment of COVID-19.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/uk-embraces-roche-s-actemra-and-regeneron-s-kevzara-for-covid-19-after-study-shows-24-drop>

Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine not affected by mutation seen in contagious coronavirus variant, study indicates

A mutation found in fast-spreading coronavirus variants does not negate the Covid-19 vaccine from Pfizer and BioNTech, researchers reported late Thursday. The result is positive, if expected, evidence that existing vaccines will be able to withstand some mutations to the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus without losing efficacy. But experts noted that this vaccine and others will still need to be tested against other mutations of concern, and that the new study only looked at one key mutation contained in the variants, not the full variants. "We're working on that part now" in additional studies, Philip Dormitzer, Pfizer's vice president and chief scientific officer of viral vaccines, told STAT.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/01/08/pfizer-biontech-vaccine-mutation-contagious/>

Hawai'i To Receive \$95 Million for COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution, Testing and Tracing

US Sen. Brian Schatz (D-HI) announced Hawai'i will receive nearly \$95 million in a new round of federal funding to support the state's COVID-19 vaccine distribution, testing and contact tracing programs. The funding from the new COVID-19 relief package, which was signed into law in December, will also support COVID-19 surveillance, containment and other mitigation activities. "This money will go directly into making sure the vaccine gets into arms of Hawai'i health care workers, seniors and everyone else as soon as possible, while also helping us stop the spread of the virus," said Sen. Schatz, member of the Senate Appropriations Committee. "We will continue working to make sure our state has the resources it needs to vaccinate everybody and keep our communities safe."

<https://mauinow.com/2021/01/08/hawai%CA%BBi-to-receive-95-million-for-covid-19-vaccine-distribution-testing-and-tracing/>

Most patients hospitalized for Covid-19 still have symptoms six months later, China study finds

Three-quarters of Covid-19 patients still have at least one symptom six months after first falling ill, researchers who followed hospital patients in China reported Friday. The new findings suggest symptoms linger longer and in a higher proportion of patients than previously thought. The largest and longest analysis to date of post-Covid recovery also warns that some patients' antibody levels fell sharply, raising concern that while waiting for a return to full health, they could be reinfected with the coronavirus. Almost two-thirds of the patients said they were still suffering from fatigue and muscle weakness, the researchers wrote in *The Lancet*. A little over a quarter had difficulty sleeping, and a little under a quarter experienced anxiety and depression. Overall, more women than men reported lingering symptoms, and people whose disease was more severe had poorer lung health. Their median age was 57.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/01/08/most-patients-hospitalized-for-covid19-still-have-symptoms-six-months-later/>

Pfizer Says Its Covid Vaccine Works Against Key Mutation

Pfizer and BioNTech announced on Friday that their Covid vaccine is effective against one of the mutations present in the new contagious variants identified in Britain and South Africa. Independent experts said the findings were good news, but cautioned that each of those coronavirus variants has several other potentially dangerous mutations that have not yet been investigated. So it's possible that one of those mutations affects how well the vaccine works. "It's the first step in the right direction," said Dr. John Brooks, the chief medical officer for the Centers for Disease Control Covid-19 emergency response. "I'm hoping that the additional work that comes out in the future will fall in line with that finding."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/08/health/pfizer-covid-vaccine-variant-mutation.html>

Covid Deaths Lowered in Trial of Tocilizumab and Sarilumab

The British government on Friday issued new guidance encouraging health care providers to use two arthritis drugs to treat severely sick Covid-19 patients, following the release of promising data from a clinical trial that has not yet undergone formal scientific review. The findings in a new paper show that treatment regimens involving the drugs tocilizumab or sarilumab reduced the death rate among Covid patients in intensive care to about 27 percent, compared with 36 percent among patients who did not receive the drugs. Based on these results, about one death would be prevented for every 12 I.C.U. patients treated early with these drugs. All of the patients in the trial received the drugs within 24 hours of entering intensive care.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/08/health/covid-arthritis-drugs-reduced-deaths.html>

Covid-19: Lockdown needs to be stricter, scientists warn

Lockdown measures in England need to be stricter to achieve the same impact as the March shutdown, scientists advising the government have said. Prof Robert West said the current rules were "still allowing a lot of activity which is spreading the virus". Prof Susan Michie also said the spread of the new more infectious variant meant the restrictions were "too lax". The government said it had adapted its approach and taken "swift action" to try and stop the spread of the virus. The warnings come after ministers launched a new campaign urging people to act like they have the virus.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55602828>

An Extra-Contagious Coronavirus Variant Is In The US — But No One Knows How Widespread It Is

A new, highly contagious version of the coronavirus has arrived in the United States, but scientists have no way to track how widespread it is. The new variant, known as B.1.1.7, was first detected in the United Kingdom and, as of Friday, has cropped up in at least 45 other countries. That includes the US, where it has been reported in dozens of cases across at least eight states: California, Connecticut, Colorado, Georgia, Florida, Texas, Pennsylvania, and New York. This version of the virus

does not appear to cause infections that are more severe or deadly, and the vaccines now slowly being distributed are still believed to be capable of fending it off.

<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/stephaniemlee/coronavirus-new-variant-transmission-b117>

6 Months Later, Covid Survivors Plagued by Health Problems

For millions of coronavirus survivors, it's an increasingly important question: How common, how serious and how long-lasting are the physical and mental aftereffects of Covid-19? A new study — believed to be the largest so far in which doctors evaluated patients six months after they became ill — suggests that many people will experience lingering problems like fatigue, insomnia, depression, anxiety or diminished lung function. The study of 1,733 coronavirus patients who were discharged from a hospital in Wuhan, China, the original epicenter of the pandemic, found that more than three-quarters of them had at least one symptom six months later.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/08/health/Covid-survivors-longterm.html>

Coronavirus Resurgence

UPDATE 1-French city of Marseille gets tougher curfew as new COVID-19 variant discovered

France has imposed a stricter evening curfew in Marseille after authorities said the new variant of the COVID-19 virus initially found in the UK had been discovered in the Mediterranean city. Marseille joined other French cities such as Strasbourg and Dijon in having its curfew moved forward to 6 p.m. from 8 p.m., and running through to 6 a.m. the following morning. The stricter Marseille measures will start on Sunday evening. The move came as COVID-19 related deaths and cases increased in France, which has the world's seventh-highest death toll from the coronavirus. There were 20,177 new, confirmed COVID cases in the last 24 hours and roughly 170 more deaths.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/update-1-french-city-of-marseille-gets-tougher-curfew-as-new-covid-19-variant-discovered/ar-BB1cBRB2>

Nine further Covid-19 deaths in Northern Ireland

A further nine people who tested positive for Covid-19 have died in Northern Ireland in the past 24 hours. The latest figures from the Department of Health also show 1,442 more positive cases for coronavirus here out of 4,777 tested. The hospitals are operating at 97% bed occupancy, with 674 Covid inpatients, 47 in ICU and 33 on ventilators. There are 137 active outbreaks across Northern Ireland's care homes. It comes as Northern Ireland entered into the second day of tough new restrictions to help stem the spread of rising Covid-19 cases.

<https://www.itv.com/news/utv/2021-01-09/nine-further-covid-19-deaths-in-northern-ireland>

Covid-19 outbreaks in care homes double in a fortnight as care sector is biggest source of infection clusters

The number of apparent Covid-19 outbreaks inside care homes has more than doubled in a fortnight with the care sector now the largest source of multi-infection incidents once again, according to official data. Public Health England figures show that in the week to 3 January, there were 749 "acute respiratory infection incidents" in care homes across the UK, up from 480 the week before and 364 in the week before that. The incidents are defined as two or more confirmed or suspected cases of a respiratory illness such as Covid-19 or flu, and a large majority were confirmed to involve Covid-19 through virus testing.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/covid-19-outbreaks-care-homes-double-in-fortnight-823088>

Northern Ireland Health Minister Robin Swann says peak of Covid-19 surge "expected in third week of January"

As Northern Ireland entered a new range of restrictions at midnight on Thursday, the Department of Health reported 20 further coronavirus related deaths. Friday's dashboard update also reported a

further 1,500 positive cases of the virus in the last 24 hour period, bringing the total number of positive cases to 86,146 since the start of the pandemic. In a statement to the Assembly this evening, Minister Swann said that "it is essential that the current lockdown successfully and significantly reduces the R number". He also said that it is estimated that in some parts of NI, where transmission is particularly high, as many as 1 in 40 people currently have Covid-19 and for Northern Ireland as a whole, the estimated figure is in the region of 1 in 60. In his statement to the Assembly, Mr Swann said: "This week, a number of our Health and Social Care Trusts have confirmed a downturn of elective surgery. This reflects the unprecedented pressures that the Covid-19 pandemic is creating in our hospitals.

<https://www.belfastlive.co.uk/news/health/northern-ireland-health-minister-robin-19590485>

U.S. breaks record for daily COVID-19 cases with 310k new infections

The United States on Saturday surpassed 370,000 coronavirus deaths a day after the nation broke a record for the highest new cases of COVID-19 in one day as California and New Jersey experienced a massive one-day surge. A total of 370,119 people have died since the start of the pandemic, according to Johns Hopkins Medical Center. Additionally, there were 310,080 new cases reported on Friday 50,000 of which were in California and 20,000 in New Jersey, according to the COVID Tracking Project. It comes as there were 23,083 COVID-19 deaths already recorded in the first eight days of the year and 16 states reported their highest number of COVID-19 hospitalizations this week, in yet more troubling signs for the post-holiday surge

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9128715/U-S-breaks-record-daily-COVID-19-cases-310k-new-infections.html>

COVID-19: NHS at breaking point and public 'not listening' to lockdown, warns top doctor

The NHS is "breaking in front of us" as people fail to obey lockdown rules, and hospitals may soon be too short of staff to keep their patients safe, a leading doctor has warned. Dr Zudin Puthuchery, council member of the Intensive Care Society and a critical care consultant, told Sky News he was "scared and angry" as the COVID-19 crisis takes its toll on hospitals - notably in London. A major incident was declared in the capital on Friday due to rising numbers of coronavirus cases threatening to overrun its already stretched hospitals.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-nhs-at-breaking-point-and-public-not-listening-to-lockdown-warns-top-doctor-12183248>

Covid-19: Act like you've got the virus, government urges

People in England are being told to act like they have got Covid as part of a government advertising campaign aimed at tackling the rise in infections. Boris Johnson said the public should "stay at home" and not get complacent. On Friday 1,325 deaths within 28 days of a positive Covid test were recorded in the UK - the highest daily figure yet - along with 68,053 new cases. Government sources say there is likely to be more focus from police on enforcing rather than explaining rules. "With over 1,000 people dying yesterday it's more important than ever everyone sticks to rules," a source told the BBC.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55598918>

Australia scrambles to block coronavirus variant; travellers must show negative test

Travellers to Australia will have to show a negative Covid-19 test before they can get on their plane, the prime minister said on Friday (Jan 8), as the city of Brisbane went into lockdown after the discovery of a case of a virulent new coronavirus variant. The more than 2 million residents of Brisbane, Australia's third-largest city, will be barred from leaving their homes for anything but essential business for three days from Friday evening after a worker at a quarantine hotel tested positive for the new variant, which was first detected in Britain. Australia has detected several cases of the variant but this was the first one to appear outside the quarantine system.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/australianz/australias-brisbane-locked-down-after-uk-covid-19-strain-found>

False Reports of a New 'U.S. Variant' Came from White House Task Force

Reports of a highly contagious new coronavirus variant in the United States, published on Friday by multiple news outlets, are based on speculative statements made by Dr. Deborah Birx and are inaccurate, according to several government officials. The erroneous report originated at a recent meeting where Dr. Birx, a member of the White House coronavirus task force, presented graphs of the escalating cases in the country. She suggested to other members of the task force that a new, more transmissible variant originating in the United States might explain the surge, as another variant did in Britain.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/08/health/US-variant-covid-false.html>

Coronavirus latest updates: India reports 18,222 new cases; mutant strain patients spike to 90

India on Saturday reported 18,222 new COVID-19 cases, 19,253 discharges, and 228 deaths. As India gears up for the corona vaccination program, a dry run has been conducted in the country to assess the readiness of the mechanism laid out for immunisation drive. In Maharashtra, dry run was conducted across 32 of the total 36 districts. Maharashtra Minister also asserted that the central government should bear the entire cost of vaccination. Meanwhile, the state's coronavirus tally has increased to 19.61 lakh with the addition of 3,693 cases. As the virus claimed the lives of 73 patients during the day, the fatality count mounted to 49,970.

<https://mumbaimirror.indiatimes.com/coronavirus/news/coronavirus-latest-updates-india-maharashtra-mumbai-covid-vaccination-mutant-strain-uk-flights-bmc-airport-thane-pune/liveblog/80181547.cms>

Coronavirus Vaccine Demand Has Health Officials Turning to Eventbrite

In the early stages of a global push to distribute the coronavirus vaccine to those who need it most — a process that has, so far, managed to be both hectic and slow — some health officials have turned to an unexpected tool: the ticketing website Eventbrite. Before the pandemic, the platform was a place to book tickets to performances, art shows or pub crawls. Now, public health officials are using it to schedule vaccination appointments. Mai Miller, 48, of Merritt Island, Fla., scoured Eventbrite last week in search of a slot for her mother. She scrolled through pages of dates and times, repeatedly refreshing the site and hunting for booking buttons that were blue, signaling availability. She found a few, but she couldn't seem to click on them quickly enough. "It was just a scramble," she said. "Like musical chairs with 20 chairs and 4,000 people."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/08/us/covid-vaccine-eventbrite.html>

Doctors raise alarm as Covid strikes down NHS workforce

In England, the number of doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers who are falling ill with Covid-19 has reached crisis levels and is seriously hampering the fight against the rapidly escalating pandemic, senior figures in the NHS have warned. The problem of staff absence, because of illness or the need to self-isolate when family members test positive, is also beginning to hamper the vaccination programme — just as the government throws maximum resources into efforts to vaccinate 15 million high priority people by the middle of February.

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/09/doctors-raise-alarm-as-covid-strikes-down-nhs-workforce?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter

US sees most single-day deaths in pandemic: 4,000+

Yesterday 4,085 Americans died of COVID-19, a bleak record in the year-long pandemic. In total, the US reported 274,403 new cases, an uptick from the 200,000 daily average seen through the beginning of the month, and one that likely represents a holiday-related increase. According to the dashboard maintained by Johns Hopkins University, the country has 21,776,072 cases and 367,635 deaths, by far the most in the world. Several states are setting daily records in both cases and deaths. New York state reported a single-day record of 17,609 new COVID-19 cases yesterday, and

has set case records 5 of the past 9 days,

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/us-sees-most-single-day-deaths-pandemic-4000>

New Lockdown

COVID-19: Ad campaign launched with plea to public as fears grow over lockdown compliance

A new public awareness campaign has been launched, urging people to "stay at home" in an attempt to encourage the public to comply with lockdown rules. It comes amid growing fears that people have not been observing social distancing rules, as case numbers surge, hospitals become swamped and deaths continue to rise. On Friday, a record 68,053 COVID-19 cases were confirmed in the UK and one in 50 people in England are now thought to have coronavirus, according to the Office for National Statistics.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-act-like-youve-got-it-governments-plea-as-fears160grow-over-lockdown-compliance-12182938>

COVID-19 lockdown fines reviewed in Derbyshire after women 'treated like criminals' over country walk

A police force is to review its lockdown fines after being criticised by two women who "thought someone had been murdered" due to the "heavy-handed" response to what they thought was a legal walk. Jessica Allen told Sky News she and her friend Eliza Moore travelled in separate cars to make the five-mile journey from their home town in Ashby de la Zouch, Leicestershire, to Foremark Reservoir, just across the county border in Derbyshire, on Wednesday.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-lockdown-fines-reviewed-in-derbyshire-after-women-treated-like-criminals-over-country-walk-12183283>

Australia on high alert after overseas travelers bring new COVID-19 strains

Australia's health officials said on Saturday they are on high alert after cases of highly transmissible new variants of the coronavirus, discovered in Britain and South Africa, have made it into the country. Brisbane, the capital of Queensland, on Saturday went into a three-day strict lockdown after the discovery of a virulent strain of the virus that causes COVID-19, linked to Britain. A variant that emerged in South Africa was found in Sydney, Australia's largest city, in a hotel quarantine. Australia has been more successful than most advanced economies in managing the pandemic, with total infections at around 28,600 and 909 deaths, while each state has at some point recorded zero COVID-19 transmissions.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-australia/australia-on-high-alert-after-overseas-travelers-bring-new-covid-19-strains-idUSKBN29E05S?il=0>

Cyprus goes into new lockdown from January 10 as COVID surges

Cyprus will introduce a new lockdown to quell rising COVID-19 infections from Jan. 10, its health minister said on Friday, the country's second since the start of the pandemic. Retail businesses such as hairdressers, beauty parlours and large department stores will shut until Jan. 31, Health Minister Constantinos Ioannou told a news conference. People will be allowed to leave home just twice a day for specific reasons such as buying groceries or medicines and taking exercise, while a current curfew banning movement from 2100 to 0500 daily will remain in force.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-cyprus/cyprus-goes-into-new-lockdown-from-january-10-as-covid-surges-idUSKBN29D1FJ>

COVID-19: Brisbane in three-day lockdown over case of new variant first identified in UK

Brisbane has entered a three-day lockdown after a cleaner at a quarantine hotel was diagnosed with the COVID-19 variant first identified in the UK. Australia's third largest city - and its surrounding areas - will also see the introduction of compulsory face masks for the first time, the Queensland

state government said. Queensland chief health officer Dr Jeannette Young said: "We know that that strain is 70% more infectious and we know the extreme difficulty that the UK has had in controlling their outbreak due to that strain.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-brisbane-in-three-day-lockdown-over-case-of-new-coronavirus-variant-12182060>

Cyprus set for second coronavirus lockdown

Cyprus is to go back into lockdown in a bid to curb an aggressive rise in coronavirus infections. From Sunday until January 31, businesses such as hairdressers, beauty salons and department stores will be closed, Health Minister Constantinos Ioannou said Friday. Authorities are also reintroducing a text messaging system that grants people permission to leave their home — which is allowed only for work, shopping for essentials, visiting a doctor or exercising, with just two outside trips a day permitted. The current curfew from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. will remain in place.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/cyprus-set-for-second-coronavirus-lockdown/>

Covid 19 coronavirus: Brisbane suburbs go into a three-day lockdown

Queensland's first community Covid-19 case in 113 days has sparked a three-day lockdown for greater Brisbane. It comes a day after Air New Zealand's first quarantine-free flight from Auckland to Brisbane took off. Today the state has recorded nine new cases – all in hotel quarantine – from more than 13,000 tests. An inner Brisbane quarantine hotel cleaner has tested positive to the virus' highly infectious UK variant.

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/covid-19-coronavirus-brisbane-suburbs-go-into-a-three-day-lockdown/BSCR4XIH7RYJRLEMOVJLKNUZZM/>