

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

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News Highlights

EU assures UK regarding vaccine supply

The EU has moved to assure the UK that COVID-19 vaccine supply will not be affected by restrictions on exports of vaccine doses. [A shortfall in doses supplied by AstraZeneca prompted the EU to restrict vaccine exports. In the UK's case](#), the EU sought to impose what amounted to a trade border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, stoking controversy. The EU has reversed course on this. UK trade secretary Liz Truss said 'we have received reassurance' that contracts with the bloc 'will not be disrupted.'

The post-pandemic world at least two years away, expert claims

Dr Clare Wenham, assistant professor of global health policy at the London School of Economics, has said a return to normalcy is not possible until the global population at large is protected. ['At the moment, the data is showing it's going to be 2023/24 before the global vaccines are distributed to everybody.'](#) she said. 'Without herd immunity in the global population, restrictions will need to be in place to prevent the spread of resistant COVID-19 strains potentially brought in from other nations.'

World Bank commits to vaccines for Africa

The World Bank has said it will provide U.S.\$12 billion to African countries for the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines. [The concessional loans offered are to assist efforts to help them access vaccines from manufacturers, through the COVAX initiative](#), which seeks to ensure equitable access for all. Since the start of the pandemic, the World Bank has committed U.S.\$25 billion to African nations and anticipates further support to the tune of U.S.\$15 billion by June.

COVID-19 restriction-related protests mushroom worldwide

Numerous European countries saw protests against lockdown restrictions. There were protest gatherings in [Brussels](#), [Budapest](#) and [Vienna](#) which led to clashes with law enforcement and arrests. In Brazil, meanwhile, [protests erupted for the second weekend in a row, demanding President Jair Bolsonaro's resignation due to his handling of the pandemic](#). And in the U.S. protests saw [the alleged temporary shutdown of one of the country's largest vaccination sites](#).

Lockdown Exit

Will 'vaccine nationalism' prolong the pandemic?

WHO warns wealthy countries against blocking supply of COVID vaccines to the developing world. At least 50 countries have now begun vaccination programmes against the coronavirus. But it is a slow process in many places, and drug makers are struggling to keep up with deliveries.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/program/inside-story/2021/1/30/will-vaccine-nationalism-prolong-the-pandemic>

EU offers UK 'reassurances' over vaccine supply after Irish border row

The EU has moved to assure Britain that vaccine exports into the country won't be stopped by the bloc's new trade restrictions, British Trade Secretary Liz Truss said. "We have received reassurance

from the European Union that those contracts will not be disrupted," Truss told Sky News on Sunday. "Vaccine protectionism is fundamentally problematic," she later told BBC presenter Andrew Marr, reiterating that the U.K. government has "had reassurances about our contracted supply" coming from the EU.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-uk-reassurances-coronavirus-vaccine-supply-ireland/>

Germany is already ordering vaccines for 2022, minister says

Germany is ordering vaccines for 2022 in case regular or booster doses are needed to keep the population immune against variants of COVID-19, Health Minister Jens Spahn said on Saturday, amid growing frustration in Europe at the slow pace of vaccination. Speaking at an online town hall of healthcare workers, Spahn defended the progress made on procuring and administering vaccines, saying 2.3 million of Germany's 83 million people had already received a dose. European governments have faced criticism over supply and production bottlenecks as vaccine makers AstraZeneca, Pfizer and Moderna have all announced cuts to delivery volumes just as they were expected to ramp up production

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-germany/germany-is-already-ordering-vaccines-for-2022-minister-says-idINKBN29Z0QD>

COVID-19: Life won't return to normal for at least two years, expert warns, saying pandemic 'isn't over until it's over globally'

Life globally will not return to normal for two or three years based on the rate of the current vaccination rollout, it has been warned - but there are early signs jabs are reducing cases in the UK. Speaking to Sky News, Dr Clare Wenham, assistant professor of global health policy at London School of Economics, said the COVID-19 pandemic will not be over until the world's population is protected. "At the moment, the data is showing it's going to be 2023/24 before the global vaccines are distributed to everybody," she said. "That's a long time. And distributing some now might be able to get us back to normal life sooner."

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-life-wont-return-to-normal-for-at-least-two-years-expert-warns-saying-pandemic-isnt-over-until-its-over-globally-12203057>

COVID-19: 'People in their 30s are dying' - exhausted ITU staff reveal brutal truth of coronavirus frontline

Hope and agony on the COVID wards. It's around 4 o'clock when seven ambulances arrive all at once. COVID-19 hospital admissions may have dipped slightly this week, but glimpse into Barnet Hospital's emergency department for a reality check. You will see we are still in the thick of a crisis. Domestic cleaner Larisa Atanasova, renowned in the hospital for her machine-like efficiency, can barely wipe down the bays quickly enough. She wipes and wipes and wipes; beds, rails, sinks and taps.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-people-in-their-30s-are-dying-exhausted-itu-staff-reveal-brutal-truths-from-covid-front-line-12202763>

Pakistan battles tsunami of Covid-19 patients with few vaccines in sight

Keeping vigil outside the hospital ward in Karachi, Daniyal Ameen watched his father breathing through a ventilator via a live video link from the intensive care unit (ICU). He came every day to see his father, 73-year-old Muhammad Ameen, as he spent weeks on oxygen battling Covid-19. The video link was set up at the private South City Hospital in Karachi to enable relatives to feel closer to their loved ones in the ICU, as visits inside that facility are prohibited. The screen is the closest Ameen has come to seeing his father for about 18 months. The 33-year-old flew back to Pakistan from his home in Melbourne, Australia, when his dad was hospitalized. "Seeing him on a screen like that was pretty traumatizing for me," said Ameen. "We told him that yes, I am here, and I want to see him healthy and smiling back again." But Ameen's father didn't survive. Instead, he became one

of thousands of Pakistanis to die from the virus.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/30/asia/coronavirus-vaccine-divide-pakistan-dst-intl-hnk/index.html>

AstraZeneca pledges EU 9 million extra doses of COVID vaccine

EU Commission President Ursula Von Der Leyen says AstraZeneca will deliver 9 million additional COVID-19 vaccine doses making a total of 40 million doses to Europe. World Health Organization experts have visited the market in Wuhan, central China, linked to the first known COVID-19 cluster, seeking clues about the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak as a number of nations further tightened restrictions in a bid to slow the spread of the pandemic. France has closed its borders to non-European countries except for essential travel, a day after Germany imposed a ban on most travellers from nations hit by new, more contagious coronavirus variants. Globally more than two million people have died from the virus, with nearly 102 million cases recorded and 56 million recoveries.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/1/31/who-probes-china-market-as-countries-tighten-virus-curbs-live>

Australian Open to be allowed 30,000 fans a day

The Australian Open will be allowed to admit up to 30,000 fans a day, around 50% of the usual attendance, when the Grand Slam gets underway on Feb. 8, Victoria state sports minister Martin Pakula said on Saturday. The limit will be reduced to 25,000 over the last five days of the tournament when there are fewer matches, but Pakula said the announcement would ensure some of the biggest crowds for a sporting event since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. "It'll mean that over the 14 days, we will have up to 390,000 people here at Melbourne Park and that's about 50% of the average over the last three years," he told reporters at the venue for the tournament.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-tennis-ausopen/australian-open-to-be-allowed-30000-fans-a-day-idUSKBN29Z06B>

'Simple is beautiful': One-shot vaccine proves effective

The first one-shot COVID-19 vaccine provides good protection against the illness, Johnson & Johnson reported in a key study released Friday, offering the world a potentially important new tool as it races to stay ahead of the rapidly mutating virus. The pharmaceutical giant's preliminary findings suggest the single-dose option may not be as strong as Pfizer's or Moderna's two-dose formula, and was markedly weaker against a worrisome mutated version of the virus in South Africa. But amid a rocky start to vaccinations worldwide, that may be an acceptable trade-off to get more people inoculated faster with an easier-to-handle shot that, unlike rival vaccines that must be kept frozen, can last months in the refrigerator. "Frankly, simple is beautiful," said Dr. Matt Hepburn, the U.S. government's COVID-19 vaccine response leader.

<https://apnews.com/a7d254f0299d846062bf6195031880a3>

The west's vaccine myopia

In the past few days, we have heard increasingly urgent warnings about vaccine nationalism. A better term would be vaccine myopia. In theory, nationalists are putting their own country first — or continent, in the case of the EU. In a global pandemic that approach makes no sense. If protecting your people is a priority, as it must be, nationalist logic should endorse global vaccine equity. Either the west tackles coronavirus globally, or we totally wall ourselves off. "The prevailing combination of vaccine nationalism and half-open borders is a losing strategy," argues Jean Pisani-Ferry. "There is no effective middle way."

<https://www.ft.com/content/37ed27e3-22f2-45b5-bea2-9c6373f469a9>

We asked coronavirus experts what summer 2021 will be like

From the midst of England's third lockdown, it's clear that any return to normality is not coming soon. It may still be several weeks before we see significant drops in the number of daily deaths and schools will not reopen until March 8 at the earliest. But if you look beyond the bleak winter and into

the spring and summer, there are reasons for cautious optimism. Over 11 per cent of the UK's population have received a dose of a Covid-19 vaccine and the number of new infections is falling. That doesn't mean that summer will be normal. With Glastonbury cancelled for a second year running and Wimbledon hedging its bets by planning for multiple different scenarios, the shadow of the pandemic will loom large over the coming months. When an uptick in Covid-19 cases could see even the most modest holiday plans go awry, it's clear there is plenty more uncertainty in store

<https://www.wired.co.uk/article/summer-plans-coronavirus-experts>

The pandemic will not end unless every country gets the vaccine

We can all see the outlines of a post-pandemic world. With vaccinations ramping up in the United States and Britain, and with Israel and the United Arab Emirates racing toward herd immunity, it is easy to imagine that a return to normalcy is on the horizon. The only question seems to be: How long will it take? But we might be seeing a false dawn. Despite the amazing progress we've made with vaccines, the truth is that our current trajectory virtually guarantees that we will never really defeat the coronavirus. It will stay alive and keep mutating and surging across the globe. Years from now, countries could be facing new outbreaks that will force hard choices between new lockdowns or new waves of disease and death.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/the-pandemic-will-not-end-unless-every-country-gets-the-vaccine/2021/01/28/e57f739a-61a7-11eb-afbe-9a11a127d146_story.html

Exit Strategies

World Bank Pledges US\$12 Billion For Africa's Vaccine Purchase - OpEd

The World Bank has expressed readiness to commit US\$12 billion as concessional loans to assist African countries access foreign vaccines. During a virtual meeting on the Africa COVID-19 Vaccine Financing and Deployment Strategy, the World Bank informed that the emergency vaccine financing projects in Africa, including Ghana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Niger, Mozambique, Tunisia, Eswatini and Cabo Verde. The funds are available now, and for most African countries, the financing would be on grant or highly concessional terms, adding, IFC is working to mobilize financing for vaccine production and therapeutics focused on developing countries.

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/01022021-world-bank-pledges-us12-billion-for-africas-vaccine-purchase-oped/>

First batch of coronavirus vaccines due to arrive in South Africa

South Africa, the continent's worst COVID-hit country, is due to receive its first batch of coronavirus vaccines on Monday. Initially scheduled for the end of January, the first one million shots of the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine produced in India will be used to inoculate healthcare workers over the next three months. The second batch of 500,000 jabs is scheduled to arrive later in February. Despite criticism from opposition parties and medical experts that the procurement process of the vaccine has taken too long, Minister of Health Zweli Mkhize has called the arrival of the vaccines from the Serum Institute of India "a massive achievement of unprecedented proportions". Once the consignment has undergone quality checks, which are going to take between 10 and 14 days, the country will begin its long-awaited, three-phase immunisation campaign. Following the inoculation of front-line healthcare workers, other high-risk groups such as the elderly, people with comorbidities and essential workers such as minibus drivers, police and teachers are going to receive their shot. The third phase targets everyone else above the age of 18.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/1/31/south-africa-set-to-receive-first-batch-of-coronavirus-vaccine>

Israel to give some coronavirus vaccines to Palestinians

Israel has agreed to transfer 5,000 doses of the coronavirus vaccine to the Palestinians to immunize front-line medical workers Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz's office announced Sunday. It was the first time that Israel has confirmed the transfer of vaccines to the Palestinians, who lag far behind Israel's aggressive vaccination campaign and have not yet received any vaccines. The World

Health Organization has raised concerns about the disparity between Israel and Palestinians living in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, and international human rights groups and U.N. experts have said Israel is responsible for the well being of Palestinians in these areas.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/israel-to-give-some-coronavirus-vaccines-to-palestinians-palestinians-program-benny-gantz-coronavirus-vaccine-coronavirus-vaccines-b1795360.html>

Israeli official sees COVID-19 turnaround when 1/3 of population vaccinated

Israel could begin overcoming the COVID-19 crisis after fully vaccinating a third of its population, an official said on Sunday, indicating it would take some weeks more than previously thought. Launching what has become the world's fastest vaccine rollout on Dec. 19, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu set protecting Israel's most vulnerable cohorts - around 24% of 9 million citizens - as the benchmark for a possible reopening of the economy in February. But a projected mid-January turnaround in curbing the spread of the illness did not transpire. Despite a third national lockdown, cases and deaths have surged among the part of the population that has not yet been vaccinated. Officials blame this on highly communicable foreign variants of the coronavirus.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-israel/israeli-official-sees-covid-19-turnaround-when-1-3-of-population-vaccinated-idUSL8N2K609U>

EU rejects AstraZeneca's compromise offer over Covid-19 vaccine

The European Union has rejected an offer from AstraZeneca of eight million more doses, with the European Commission chief insisting that the company honour its existing "binding contract". Details of an intended compromise in the row between Anglo-Swedish pharmaceutical firm and the bloc over a sudden cut to Covid vaccine supplies emerged today. An EU official said that the cuts, blamed on production problems at a Belgian plant, would mean only 31 million doses being delivered in the period to the end of March, a 60 per cent reduction. It is a major blow for the bloc's 27 member countries, which are already lagging behind the vaccination campaigns in Israel, Britain and the United States.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/germany-rejects-oxford-astrazeneca-covid-vaccine-for-over-65s-bvd68vfsx>

Coronavirus: WHO criticises EU over vaccine export controls

The World Health Organization (WHO) has criticised the EU's announcement of export controls on vaccines produced within the bloc, saying such measures risked prolonging the pandemic. The EU introduced the measure amid a row with vaccine manufacturers over delivery shortfalls. But WHO vice-head Mariangela Simao said it was a "very worrying trend". Earlier WHO chief Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said "vaccine nationalism" could lead to a "protracted recovery". Speaking at the Davos Agenda - a virtual version of the global summit - he said vaccine hoarding would "keep the pandemic burning and... slow global economic recovery", in addition to being a "catastrophic moral failure" that could further widen global inequality.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-55860540?fbclid=IwAR2NJR8-jYMoxwDp1zLxObIR7zmaqsPMdVKKKYhIRXfynXckEgvyahcanyk>

When Covid-19 vaccines are about to expire, health care workers must scramble to make sure they are used

Mechanical breakdowns. Bad weather. Expiration deadlines. The earliest phases of Covid-19 vaccine distribution in some instances have left doctors, nurses, and health officials scrambling to inoculate Americans. In the worst cases, valuable doses have been wasted or thrown out. However, quick thinking by practitioners mixed with a bit of luck have found them administering vaccines in unique circumstances. On Thursday night, after a freezer containing vaccine doses malfunctioned in Seattle, a nearby hospital had less than nine hours to administer more than 800 vaccinations before they spoiled. Vaccines from Pfizer-BioTech and Moderna require certain low temperatures for storage and have a limited shelf life when exposed to room temperature.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/when-covid-19-vaccines-are-about-to-expire-health-care-workers-must-scramble-to-make-sure-they-are-used/ar-BB1deqOM>

Failed freezer forced overnight dash to give out more than 1,600 doses of coronavirus vaccine

The last shots were given at about 3.45am, out on the street, with literally no time to spare. All night, staff and volunteers with Seattle's Swedish Health Services had been rushing to administer hundreds of doses of the coronavirus vaccine set to expire early in the morning after a freezer malfunction. Finally, they had only a few dozen shots left and about 15 minutes to get them into people's arms. "We were literally like . . .who can get people here? People started texting and calling and we were just counting down," said Kevin Brooks, the chief operating officer of Swedish, who helped coordinate everything at their clinic at Seattle University. "Thirty-seven. Thirty-five. Thirty-three . . . People were showing up and running down the hall."

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/seattle-coronavirus-vaccine-fridge-doses-b1795205.html>

COVID-19: EU 'recognise they made a mistake' in move to block vaccine exports, says Gove

The EU "recognise they made a mistake" by invoking a Brexit deal clause to prevent coronavirus vaccine shipments entering the UK, Michael Gove has said. The bloc has faced widespread criticism after its short-lived move to override part of the agreement on Northern Ireland over export controls. And Minister for the Cabinet Office Mr Gove said the union now realised it was in the wrong - and promised the UK would "work with them to make sure their own problems can be tackled".

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-eu-recognises-they-made-a-mistake-in-move-to-block-vaccine-exports-says-gove-12203439?dcmp=snt-sf-twitter>

Shortage of coronavirus shots heaps pressure on European leaders

Edleff Joachim should have been among the first to receive a jab when Germany launched its mass Covid-19 vaccination programme on December 27. A month on, the 84-year-old is still waiting. "It's just chaos," said Mr Joachim, who lives in the town of Görlitz on the Polish border. "No one seems to know what's going on." His frustration bears testament to a German vaccination drive in disarray — a mess now replicated across much of the EU due to a shortage of doses. Over-80s were supposed to be inoculated first, along with care home residents, but tens of thousands of eligible Germans have yet to get the shot.

<https://www.ft.com/content/fe851440-abcb-43e0-a7c9-a86a05d275db>

Macron: AstraZeneca vaccine seems 'quasi-ineffective' on older people

French President Emmanuel Macron said Friday the AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine appeared to be "quasi-ineffective" on people older than 65 — just hours before the EU's drugs regulator approved it for use on all adults. "The real problem on AstraZeneca is that it doesn't work the way we were expecting it to," Macron told a group of reporters, including POLITICO, in Paris. "We're waiting for the EMA [European Medicines Agency] results, but today everything points to thinking it is quasi-ineffective on people older than 65, some say those 60 years or older." Later in the day, the EMA gave the vaccine the green light. It said: "There are not yet enough results in older participants (over 55 years old) to provide a figure for how well the vaccine will work in this group. However, protection is expected, given that an immune response is seen in this age group and based on experience with other vaccines; as there is reliable information on safety in this population, EMA's scientific experts considered that the vaccine can be used in older adults."

<https://www.politico.eu/article/coronavirus-vaccine-europe-astrazeneca-macron-quasi-ineffective-older-pe/>

I'm a Covid vaccinator and thousands of doses are being thrown away every day - it's an outrage

I'm a doctor and I'm writing to tell you that the news about coronavirus vaccines being binned in

Britain is absolutely true. The Pfizer vaccine is currently the main vaccine programme in the UK. The challenges around its use have been well documented. Once thawed from its -70C storage, it has to be used within a matter of days. Some vials contain extra doses of the vaccine, an extra one to two doses can be obtained from the advertised five doses. A combination of these factors – as well as reports of some centres unexpectedly receiving extra vaccines – mean it's notoriously difficult to be precise about how many people to invite to a vaccine centre on any given day. In turn, this means there are often extra doses left over at the end of the day.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/covid-vaccine-wastage-pfizer-b1794920.html>

Algeria starts COVID-19 vaccination drive with Russian shots

Algeria launched its coronavirus vaccination campaign Saturday in the city where the country's first COVID-19 case was confirmed in March. The North African nation is using Russia's Sputnik-V vaccine, and a 65-year-old retiree received the first shot at a hospital in Blida, a city about 40 kilometers (25 miles) southwest of the capital, Algiers. Health authorities were on hand for the event. "All measures have been taken to ensure a good rollout of the vaccination campaign on the national territory," Health Minister Abderrahmane Benbouzid said. Vaccines will get administered in all regions of the country starting Sunday with health care workers, elderly adults and other vulnerable populations.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/algeria-starts-covid19-vaccination-drive-with-russian-shots-city-algeria-shots-country-algiers-b1795190.html>

More than 1,100 doses of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine are accidentally DESTROYED in Florida

Palm Beach health care worker accidentally shut off power supply to a refrigerator where the Pfizer vaccines were being stored. The Pfizer vaccine must be kept refrigerated in order to preserve some of its components or else it is rendered useless. The blunder meant that 232 vials of the vaccine – consisting of 1,160 doses – had to be destroyed. Palm Beach County officials are now storing supplies in centralized refrigerators with a backup generator to prevent such an incident from reoccurring. Officials are struggling to administer the COVID-19 vaccine to the American population in a timely fashion. Only 6.9 percent of Americans have received their first Pfizer or Moderna shot; just 1.4 percent of citizens are fully vaccinated. It is concerning news given that highly-contagious mutations of the virus from the UK, Brazil and South Africa have now been detected on US soil.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9205085/More-1-100-doses-Pfizers-COVID-19-vaccine-accidentally-DESTROYED-Florida.html>

COVID-19: BAME communities less likely to take coronavirus vaccine, ONS figures suggest

People from ethnic minority backgrounds are far less likely to take the COVID-19 vaccine, according to new data. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) said only 49% of 150 black or black British adults said they would be likely to get a COVID-19 vaccine, compared with 85% of 13,240 white adults. More than a quarter (28%) said they would be unlikely to do so, as did 7% of white adults. Some 13% of 170 people with mixed ethnicity and 8% of 460 Asian or Asian British adults said they would be unlikely to get a jab.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-bame-communities-less-likely-to-take-coronavirus-vaccine-ons-figures-suggest-12202227>

Norway to gradually ease capital's COVID-19 lockdown from February 3

The Norwegian government will gradually loosen the capital region's coronavirus lockdown, allowing some shops and recreational activities to reopen from Feb. 3 onwards, Health Minister Bent Høie said on Saturday. The outbreak of a more contagious variant of COVID-19, first identified in Britain, had prompted the introduction of stricter measures on Jan. 23, including the closure of all non-

essential stores in and around Oslo for the first time in the pandemic. "Infections are going down continuously in Norway and we now have a better overview over the outbreak and spread," Hoeie told a news conference.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-norway-idUSKBN29Z0EK>

Public back teachers getting half-term Covid jabs to re-open schools again

The public supports our bid to prioritise teachers for the Covid-19 vaccine in Phase 2 of the rollout, a poll revealed. Teachers topped the poll, which asked who should be next after the most vulnerable. Pressure is growing on Boris Johnson to get school staff vaccinated. In a poll by Ipsos MORI, 46% said school and nursery staff should come before healthy 60 to 69-year-olds, ahead of 42% for emergency service workers. Labour wants school staff vaccinated in the February half term to make it safer if pupils start to back from March 8. Keir Starmer said it was vital to avoid staff being off sick or isolating due to Covid-19. He said: "It's likely to go back to the disruption we have in September and October.

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/public-back-teachers-getting-half-23404736>

How Europe fell behind on vaccines

The European Union's vaccination effort came under fire just as it was beginning to deliver. Heralded for months as the flagship of European solidarity during the coronavirus pandemic, the European Commission's strategy of joint vaccine procurement is now being accused by national leaders of being too bureaucratic, too limiting to its members, too slow. Specifically, the bloc's decisions to prioritize process over speed and to put solidarity between EU countries ahead of giving individual governments more room to maneuver have been criticized for holding back the coronavirus response.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-coronavirus-vaccine-struggle-pfizer-biontech-astrazeneca/>

U.S. Labor Department issues COVID-19 workplace safety guidance

The guidance issued by the department's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) outlines key measures for limiting the coronavirus' spread, including ensuring infected or potentially infected people are not in the workplace, implementing and following physical distancing protocols and using surgical masks or cloth face coverings. It also provides guidance on use of personal protective equipment, improving ventilation, good hygiene and routine cleaning. But the guidance is not a standard or regulation, and it creates no new legal obligations.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-economy-labor/u-s-labor-department-issues-covid-19-workplace-safety-guidance-idUSKBN29Y2X9>

Partisan Exits

More Brazil protests against Bolsonaro's COVID-19 response

Protesters in Brazil rallied for the second straight weekend in multiple cities to demand the resignation of President Jair Bolsonaro for his government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. Two hundred people protested on Sunday in Brasilia, the capital, holding signs and banners reading, "Bolsonaro Out" and "Impeachment Now", while a procession of cars honked their horns in support. Other demonstrations were also held in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/1/31/more-brazil-protests-over-bolsonaros-covid-19-response>

Anti-vaccine protesters temporarily shut down major coronavirus vaccine site

One of the largest vaccination sites in America briefly shut down Saturday afternoon because maskless, anti-vaccine protesters blocked the entrance, officials said. For nearly an hour, thousands of motorists in line to get a coronavirus vaccine shot at Dodger Stadium, Los Angeles, were stalled as about 50 people demonstrating against immunization efforts caused officials to temporarily close the site's gates, Los Angeles Fire Department spokesman David Ortiz told The Washington Post. The

protest had no impact on the number of shots given Saturday at the site, which can vaccinate 8,000 people a day, Ortiz said. No arrests were made, according to police. The protesters, members of anti-vaccine and far-right groups, organized online, according to The Los Angeles Times <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/covid-vaccine-protesters-anti-vax-la-b1795352.html>

Hundreds arrested at anti-lockdown demonstration in Brussels

Police arrested more than 300 people demonstrating in central Brussels on Sunday against measures to curb rising infections of the coronavirus, according to local media. Both Bruzz and Le Soir reported the arrests occurred as police broke up demonstrations around Brussels' central train station and the Mont des Arts area. No charges have been so far reported. Sunday's crowds were made up of both Dutch- and French-speaking demonstrators, which included Yellow Vest protesters and football supporters, a police spokesman told Bruzz.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/200-arrested-anti-lockdown-coronavirus-demonstration-brussels/>

Thousands protest in Vienna as far-right march on COVID measures banned

Thousands of protesters faced off with police in riot gear in Vienna on Sunday at the site of a banned far-right demonstration against coronavirus restrictions. Vienna police banned numerous protests planned for this weekend, including one by the far-right Freedom Party on Sunday, on the grounds that protesters have generally failed to observe rules on social distancing and often not worn face masks. Since Dec. 26, Austria has been in its third national lockdown, with non-essential shops and many other businesses closed and their staff unable to work. The opposition Freedom Party has denounced various restrictions as "corona madness" and its leaders have sent mixed messages on issues such as vaccinations.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-austria-demo/thousands-protest-in-vienna-as-far-right-march-on-covid-measures-banned-idUSKBN2A00K5>

Hungarians protest against lockdown measures despite gathering ban

Restaurant workers were among hundreds of people protesting against coronavirus lockdown measures on Sunday in Budapest, and at least 100 restaurants planned to re-open even as the government threatened them with heavy fines. Prime Minister Viktor Orban's government has said it could only start easing the measures if the number of coronavirus cases falls sharply, or if large numbers of Hungarians are inoculated. Hungary became first in the EU this week to sign a deal for Russia's Sputnik V COVID vaccine and Chinese Sinopharm's vaccine. nL1N2K40FS. Current lockdown measures include a night curfew and closing secondary schools, and all restaurants and cafes, except for takeaway meals.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-hungary-protests/hungarians-protest-against-lockdown-measures-despite-gathering-ban-idUSKBN2A00G5>

Trump officials actively lobbied to deny states money for vaccine rollout last fall

Top Trump officials actively lobbied Congress to deny state governments any extra funding for the Covid-19 vaccine rollout last fall — despite frantic warnings from state officials that they didn't have the money they needed to ramp up a massive vaccination operation. The push, described to STAT by congressional aides in both parties and openly acknowledged by one of the Trump officials, came from multiple high-ranking Trump health officials in repeated meetings with legislators. Without the extra money, states spent last October and November rationing the small pot of federal dollars they had been given. And when vaccines began shipping in December, states seemed woefully underprepared.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/01/31/trump-officials-lobbied-to-deny-states-money-for-vaccine-rollout/>

COVID-19: Tory MP who said NHS figures were being 'manipulated' refuses to apologise

A Tory MP who told anti-vaccination campaigners to "persist" in protesting lockdown and that NHS capacity figures were being "manipulated" to exaggerate the scale of the pandemic has refused to

apologise for his remarks. Sir Desmond Swayne said the comments, made in November to Save Our Rights UK and obtained by Sky News, were "perfectly legitimate at the time" and he accepts that the COVID-19 situation "has changed entirely with the new variant".

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-michael-gove-says-tory-mp-out-of-order-to-tell-anti-vaxxers-to-persist-against-restrictions-12201020>

Lift lockdown once most vulnerable are vaccinated, urges senior Tory

The leader of the influential group of Tory MPs pressuring prime minister Boris Johnson over the UK's Covid lockdown said on Friday that all restrictions should be eased once the most vulnerable groups had been vaccinated. Mark Harper, who chairs the Covid Recovery Group of Conservative MPs, told the Financial Times' Payne's Politics podcast that politicians rather than scientists should determine the risk to society from the virus after everyone aged 50 and over has received the vaccine. "I think once you vaccinated certainly the top nine groups, and you've reduced 99 per cent of those that have died from Covid, and to reduce the level of hospitalisation by 80 per cent, it seems to me at that point, you'd struggle to make an argument for having any restrictions in place at all," he said.

<https://www.ft.com/content/ea155fea-8270-41c4-aa8c-3c0e35670964>

Scores of foreigners breach lockdown rules at Austrian ski resort

Austrian police have found 96 foreigners from across Europe at a ski resort in breach of pandemic-related rules on entering the country and the national lockdown. The mayor of St Anton, one of Austria's top resorts, said this week that dozens of young tourists from across Europe had recently come to his town and circumvented lockdown rules under which ski lifts are open but hotels are closed to tourists. "Among others Britons, Danes, Swedes, Romanians, Germans, Australians, Irish people and Poles were checked and fined," the police force of the western province of Tyrol said in a statement on Friday night. The operation was carried out on Friday evening by 15 officers. Those found in breach face fines of up to €2,180 (£1,931), the statement said.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/30/scores-of-foreigners-breach-lockdown-rules-at-austrian-ski-resort>

Austria finds 96 foreigners in breach of lockdown rules at top ski resort

Austrian police have found 96 foreigners from across Europe at the ski resort of St Anton am Arlberg in breach of pandemic-related rules on entering the country and the national lockdown.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-austria-skiers-idUSKBN29Z0FD>

Contract between European Commission and AstraZeneca

Following the renewed request from the European Commission on 27 January 2021, pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca has agreed to publish the redacted contract signed between the two parties on 27 August 2020. The Commission welcomes the company's commitment towards more transparency in its participation in the rollout of the EU Vaccines Strategy. Transparency and accountability are important to help build the trust of European citizens and to make sure that they can rely on the effectiveness and safety of the vaccines purchased at the EU level. The Commission hopes to be able to publish all contracts under the Advance Purchase Agreements in the near future.

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_302

EU vaccine export row: Bloc backtracks on controls for NI

The EU has reversed its decision to temporarily override part of the Brexit deal amid an ongoing row over Covid vaccine supplies in the bloc. The move would have seen checks at the border of Ireland and Northern Ireland to prevent shipments entering the UK. But the European Commission later said it would ensure the Northern Ireland Protocol is "unaffected". Boris Johnson had expressed "grave concerns" about the plan in a phone call with the commission's president. President Ursula von der Leyen later tweeted to say she had held "constructive talks" with the prime minister. She said they had "agreed on the principle that there should not be restrictions on the export of vaccines by companies where they are fulfilling contractual responsibilities".

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-55865539>

Explainer: what is article 16 of the Northern Ireland protocol?

Under Brexit's Northern Ireland protocol, all products are normally permitted to be exported from the EU to Northern Ireland without checks, as NI remains in the single market for goods and continues to operate under EU custom rules. The protocol was a resolution to the sticky Irish border question and was designed to avoid a return of checkpoints along the politically sensitive frontier and minimise potential disruption of cross-border trade. However, amid a row over vaccine delivery shortfalls, the EU has invoked article 16 of the NI protocol which allows the EU or UK to unilaterally suspend aspects of its operations if either side considers that aspect to be causing "economic, societal or environmental difficulties".

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jan/29/explainer-what-is-article-16-of-the-northern-ireland-protocol>

EU stands its ground in vaccine row, says AstraZeneca contract 'crystal clear'

The European Union stood its ground in a row with AstraZeneca over COVID-19 vaccine supplies on Friday, pressing the Anglo-Swedish drugmaker to deliver the doses as promised in its contract. The EU, whose member states are far behind Israel, Britain and the United States in rolling out vaccines, is scrambling to get supplies just as the West's biggest drugmakers slow deliveries to the bloc due to production problems. AstraZeneca said last week it would cut deliveries in the first quarter due to production issues at a Belgian factory. An EU official said that meant the EU would receive 31 million doses in the period, or 60% less than initially agreed. In a bid to break the deadlock, AstraZeneca offered 8 million more doses of its shot to the EU, but the bloc said that was too far short of what was originally promised, an EU official told Reuters.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-eu-astrazeneca/eu-stands-its-ground-in-vaccine-row-says-astrazeneca-contract-crystal-clear-idUSKBN29Y0LB>

Canadian airlines to cancel Mexico, Caribbean flights amid vaccine shortfall

Canada's major airlines have agreed to suspend all flights to Mexico and the Caribbean for three months starting on Sunday as the country's COVID-19 vaccine rollout suffered another setback, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Friday. All airline passengers arriving from abroad will also be required to take a mandatory COVID-19 test at the airport and wait in a hotel for up to three days at their own expense until the results arrive, Trudeau said. "Now is just not the time to be flying," the prime minister told reporters. Trudeau also said Moderna Inc's next delivery would be almost a quarter smaller than expected.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-canada/canadian-airlines-to-cancel-mexico-caribbean-flights-amid-vaccine-shortfall-idUSKBN29Y2ER>

Covid-19 vaccine chaos as EU is forced into U-turn after blocking supplies to the North

The EU has backtracked on a decision to block vaccines being transported into Northern Ireland. The move followed hours of diplomatic chaos after it emerged the EU triggered an article of the Northern Protocol which introduce check on good entering Northern Ireland. This would have allowed EU authorities stop the importation of vaccines manufactured on the continent entering Northern Ireland.

<https://www.independent.ie/news/covid-19-vaccine-chaos-as-eu-is-forced-into-u-turn-after-blocking-supplies-to-the-northern-40028406.html>

UK restricts COVID medicine exports amid AstraZeneca vaccine fight

The U.K. placed a series of export restrictions last year on around 100 medicines that could be used to treat COVID-19 patients despite criticizing others for considering similar limits on vaccines. In response to a question from POLITICO, Prime Minister Boris Johnson chastised the EU at a press conference in Downing Street Tuesday for considering putting restrictions on the export of coronavirus vaccines — calling such curbs "nonsensical." His comments follow increasingly heated

rhetoric from the European Commission directed at AstraZeneca over its inability to fulfil orders made by the bloc for its vaccine. The Commission is now considering a plan to mandate that companies inform Brussels ahead of making any shipments of vaccine out of the EU.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/uk-coronavirus-vaccine-astrazeneca-export-boris-johnson/>

Continued Lockdown

Tired and upset: a lament for Portugal's long lockdown

Portugal's extension of a nationwide lockdown this week in the face of spiking COVID-19 infections was no surprise to Marco, 43, who had to shut his Lisbon fitness studio earlier this month. But he is tired and upset. "We've been at this for a year, something should have been done sooner," he told Reuters on Friday as he walked his dog in an otherwise largely empty church square. Facing the world's highest per capita death toll, Portugal has extended a harsh lockdown until mid-February, banned non-essential travel for its nationals and imposed checks on the border with Spain.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-portugal/tired-and-upset-a-lament-for-portugals-long-lockdown-idUSL8N2K43H5>

Portugal curbs travel, extends lockdown in face of world's worst virus surge

Portugal extended a nationwide lockdown until mid-February and announced curbs on international travel on Thursday, as Prime Minister Antonio Costa accepted blame for the world's worst coronavirus surge, with hospitals on the verge of being overrun. With a population of 10 million, Portugal reported a record 303 COVID-19 deaths and 16,432 new cases, and now has the world's highest per capita seven-day averages of both new cases and deaths. "The number of deaths is growing at an unimaginable pace," said Portugal's President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa as he addressed the nation in a prime-time speech. "The pressure is extreme...we need to act quickly and drastically."

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-portugal-idUSKBN29X0XO>

Israel Struggles With Coronavirus Variants

With more than 30% of its population vaccinated, Israel leads the fight against Covid-19. Yet the emergence of more infectious variants is overwhelming its hospitals, showing the long road ahead for the rest of the world. After inoculating 82% of Israelis aged 60 and more, going into a nearly month-long lockdown and shutting down the national airport this week, Israel is indicating the end of the tunnel may be further away. That dents hopes for a rapid vaccine-driven global recovery after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's pledge at Davos to make Israel a test case for how quickly Covid shots can help reopen economies.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-29/world-s-most-vaccinated-nation-struggles-with-new-virus-variants>

Covid: Data shows outbreaks in England's offices in lockdown

More than 60 suspected Covid outbreaks in offices were recorded in the first two weeks of the current lockdown in England, a BBC investigation has found. Under England's lockdown rules, in force since 6 January, people should work from home if they can. Public Health England figures, obtained via a Freedom of Information request, suggests offices have had more outbreaks compared to other workplaces. The government has urged firms to help employees work from home. It said it has worked with trade unions, businesses and medical experts to produce "comprehensive guidance" to help firms that are permitted to stay open and it has introduced rapid testing of employees.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55843506>

Scientific Viewpoint

Philippines to Receive 5.6 Million Vaccine Doses This Quarter

The Philippine government said at least 5.6 million coronavirus vaccine doses produced by Pfizer-BioNTech and AstraZeneca Plc are expected to arrive in the country within the first quarter. The country will receive a total of 9.4 million doses from the two pharmaceutical makers by the second quarter, it said in an emailed statement Sunday, citing a letter from Aurelia Nguyen, managing director of the World Health Organization-backed Covax initiative.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-31/philippines-to-receive-5-6-million-vaccine-doses-this-quarter>

Novavax submits COVID-19 vaccine for approval as Ottawa seeks EU reassurances on export rules

Canada's hopes of speeding up COVID-19 vaccinations brightened slightly over the weekend as regulators began work to approve a new inoculation, even as the federal government sought to head off any restrictions on vaccine shipments from Europe. Novavax quietly submitted its COVID-19 vaccine to Health Canada for regulatory approval on Friday, less than two weeks after Ottawa finalized a deal with the Maryland-based company for 52 million doses of the shot. Because of the emergency nature of the pandemic Health Canada is accepting applications for vaccines before the final trial data is ready, allowing the review team to start pouring over the documents on an ongoing basis, rather than waiting until everything is finished.

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-novavax-submits-covid-19-vaccine-for-approval-as-ottawa-seeks-eu/>

Covid vaccines already having an effect on UK outbreak, research suggests

The UK's mass vaccination rollout already appears to be having an easing effect on the Covid crisis, according to data. Research due to be published in days is set to provide evidence that Britons are receiving some protection from the virus. Though it is not yet clear if vaccines block transmission of the virus from one person to another, the deputy chairman of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) said early data "indicate a vaccine effect from the first dose in both younger adults and in older adults over 80".

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/covid-vaccines-virus-biontech-anthony-harnden-b1795214.html>

WHO team visits Wuhan market where first COVID infections detected

A World Health Organization-led team of experts investigating the origins of COVID-19 visited Huanan market on Sunday, the now-shuttered wholesale seafood centre in the Chinese city of Wuhan where the new coronavirus was initially detected. Since being released from a two-week quarantine on Thursday, the team has visited hospitals and markets, as well as an exhibition commemorating Wuhan's battle with the virus, which included a 76-day lockdown of the city of 11 million. "Very important site visits today - a wholesale market first & Huanan Seafood Market just now. Very informative & critical for our joint teams to understand the epidemiology of COVID as it started to spread at the end of 2019," team member Peter Daszak said on Twitter.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-who-china-idINKBN2A004J>

Coronavirus in Ireland: Astrazeneca vaccine decision on over-65s within days

The Irish medicine regulator will decide in the coming days if the Astrazeneca vaccine can be used on over-65s, the health minister said, after it emerged that Ireland would receive 300,000 fewer doses than expected. The vaccine was approved for use in Europe yesterday for everyone over the age of 18, despite concerns from the German regulator that it could not be authorised for over-65s due to a lack of data.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/coronavirus-in-ireland-astrazeneca-vaccine-decision-on-over-65s-within-days-075c8hgbd>

As variants threaten Covid-19 progress, US weighs trial results of Johnson & Johnson vaccine candidate

As Covid-19 variants are increasingly found in the United States, experts say Johnson & Johnson's

vaccine candidate would help in the pandemic fight, despite trial reports showing apparently lower efficacy rates than two vaccines already authorized in the US. Johnson & Johnson's single-shot coronavirus vaccine was shown to be 66% effective in preventing moderate and severe disease in a global Phase 3 trial and 85% effective against severe disease, the company announced Friday. It was 72% effective against moderate and severe disease in the US, the company said.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/01/29/health/us-coronavirus-friday/index.html>

How effective are coronavirus vaccines at stopping transmission?

People who have been vaccinated against covid-19 can still catch and transmit the virus, but are significantly less likely to do so than unvaccinated people, the latest data suggests. The question of whether vaccines halt transmission is one of the biggest and most important unknowns of the pandemic. If they do, vaccine-induced herd immunity may be possible.

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2266330-how-effective-are-coronavirus-vaccines-at-stopping-transmission/>

Covid-19 Patients With Schizophrenia Might Be At A Higher Risk Of Death

A schizophrenia spectrum diagnosis could be at a higher risk of severe Covid-19 and might also face 2.7 times higher risk for mortality within 45 days of testing positive, according to the results of a study published in JAMA Psychiatry.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/anuradhavaranasri/2021/01/30/covid-19-patients-with-schizophrenia-might-be-at-a-higher-risk-of-death/>

Covid-19: Novavax vaccine shows 89% efficacy in UK trials

A new coronavirus vaccine has been shown to be 89% effective in large-scale UK trials. The Novavax jab is the first to show in trials that it is effective against the new virus variant found in the UK, the BBC's medical editor Fergus Walsh said. The UK has secured 60 million doses of the jab, which will be made in Stockton-on-Tees in north-east England. Meanwhile, a single-dose vaccine developed by Janssen is 66% effective, trial results have shown. Janssen, a company owned by Johnson & Johnson, is also investigating whether giving two doses will give either stronger or longer-lasting protection.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55850352>

WHO team, on tightly controlled China mission, visits hospital

The World Health Organization-led team investigating the origins of COVID-19 during a mission that has been tightly controlled by its Chinese hosts visited a hospital on Saturday in the central city of Wuhan that treated early coronavirus patients. On its second day after two weeks in quarantine, the team went to Jinyintan Hospital, where doctors had collected samples from patients suffering from an unidentified pneumonia in late 2019. "Important opportunity to talk directly w/ medics who were on the ground at that critical time fighting COVID!", team member Peter Daszak said on Twitter. Team members leaving the hospital did not speak to journalists, who have been kept at a distance since the group left its quarantine hotel on Thursday.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-who-china-idUSKBN29Z0AD>

Vietnam approves AstraZeneca vaccine after new virus outbreak

Vietnam's health ministry approved the AstraZeneca vaccine for domestic inoculation, the first coronavirus vaccine to be approved in the country, the government said on Saturday as it battles its biggest outbreak yet. Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc had said Vietnam must try to obtain the vaccine in the first quarter to ensure people's health. Vietnam has kept its tally to a low 1,739 infections and 35 deaths.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-vietnam-vaccine-idUSKBN29Z02X>

CDC reports 'community spread' of South African variant; Johnson & Johnson single-shot vaccine found to be safe. Latest COVID-19 updates.

Johnson & Johnson's one-shot vaccine protects against COVID-19, and while it is not as effective as

other vaccines already authorized in the U.S., it appears to be extremely effective against severe disease. Johnson & Johnson said Friday that data from its late-stage trial in the U.S. and seven other countries showed the vaccine had an overall 66% effectiveness in preventing moderate to severe illness. The two-shot vaccines, from Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech, are more than 94% effective, but J&J's global research chief, Dr. Mathai Mammen, said, "Gambling on one dose was certainly worthwhile."

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/health/2021/01/29/covid-news-us-cases-january-novavax-vaccine-new-york-california/4299519001/>

Covid mutations could prolong the pandemic another year, health officials warn

Dr Fauci warned the pandemic could get 'worse' if variants end up being resistant to newly developed vaccines. Two people in South Carolina are the first US cases of the South African variant. Neither has a known history of travel or a link to the other, the state health department said Thursday. South Africa's 501Y.V2 variant is thought to be about 50% more infectious. But it has mutations to the spike protein that Dr Fauci warned may make vaccines less effective against it. Pfizer and Moderna both found this week their shots are 'protective' against the variant but the protection may wane faster

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9200185/Covid-mutations-prolong-pandemic-year-health-officials-warn.html>

Novavax will submit results to UK regulator 'within two weeks', clinical trial chief says

Trial results showed it was 89.3 per cent effective against coronavirus and the Kent variant of the virus. And 60 per cent effective against South African strain which has sparked concern among many scientists. Professor Paul Heath, who led trials, said today they may be able to conclude their trial within two weeks. He added results against the South African strain were 'really good' and may be replicated by other jabs

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9201331/Novavax-submit-results-UK-regulator-two-weeks-clinical-trial-chief-says.html>

J&J vaccine shown to prevent 85% of COVID-19 hospital cases, deaths

Results from an international phase 3 trial of Johnson & Johnson's single-dose COVID-19 vaccine show it is overall 66% effective in preventing moderate to severe symptoms of COVID-19. The vaccine was 85% effective in preventing COVID-19-related hospitalizations and deaths. The vaccine has been a long-hoped for game-changer in the global fight against the pandemic because it requires only one dose, can be manufactured in billions of doses, and requires only standard refrigeration. "A one-shot vaccine is considered by the World Health Organization to be the best option in pandemic settings, enhancing access, distribution and compliance. Eighty-five percent efficacy in preventing severe COVID-19 disease and prevention of COVID-19-related medical interventions will potentially protect hundreds of millions of people from serious and fatal outcomes of COVID-19," said Paul Stoffels, MD, chief scientific officer for Johnson & Johnson, in a company news release.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/jj-vaccine-shown-prevent-85-covid-19-hospital-cases-deaths>

COVID-19 antibodies transmit from moms to babies during pregnancy

SARS-CoV-2 antibodies transferred across the placenta in 87% of pregnant women who had COVID-19 at some point, suggesting that newborns of seropositive mothers may have some protection against the novel coronavirus at birth, according to a study today in JAMA Pediatrics. However, a second, unpublished study suggests that the maternal-infant antibody transfer is lower than expected.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/covid-19-antibodies-transmit-moms-babies-during-pregnancy>

EU regulators give nod to AstraZeneca COVID vaccine for emergency use

The European Medicines Agency (EMA) has recommended the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine for

emergency use in European Union (EU) countries, which came with more details about efficacy, which is about 60%, with the vaccine showing good impact against severe disease. The approval shed more light on findings from phase 3 clinical trials in the United Kingdom, Brazil, and South Africa and comes amid a row between EU officials and the company over supply contracts, which followed an announcement from the company that its supply would be less than expected.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/eu-regulators-give-nod-astrazeneca-covid-vaccine-emergency-use>

Novartis pitches in to help produce Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine

Only a day after Novartis said it was looking at offering its manufacturing network to the global COVID-19 fight, the company is joining forces with Pfizer and BioNTech to help produce mRNA vaccines. It's the latest example of an unlikely Big Pharma partnership spurred by the urgent need to defeat the pandemic. Novartis inked an initial agreement with BioNTech to allow the mRNA biotech use of Novartis' facility in Stein, Switzerland. The production will start in the second quarter, and the partners expect dose deliveries to begin in the third quarter. The Pfizer/BioNTech shot is one of only a few that have been approved in countries around the world, and in the early stages of the rollout, demand has greatly outstripped supply. Pfizer and BioNTech have been working to scale up their manufacturing network to deliver 2 billion doses this year, but the effort led to a temporary supply disruption in Europe earlier this month.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/novartis-signs-up-to-help-produce-pfizer-biontech-covid-19-vaccine>

Eli Lilly's COVID-19 antibody picks up \$871M in Q4—and carries blockbuster hopes for 2021

Eli Lilly's COVID-19 antibody stole the show during the fourth quarter, and the company says there's more to come as the U.S. government just placed another big order—and Lilly itself projects blockbuster coronavirus revenues in 2021. Lilly's first COVID-19 antibody, bamlanivimab, generated \$871 million in fourth-quarter revenues, driving the drugmaker to a 22% revenue increase for the period. Excluding the COVID-19 antibody, Lilly's revenues grew 7%. The company isn't alone in seeing a big sales bump from pandemic drugs, vaccines and diagnostics. Last year, Gilead's antiviral remdesivir provided a sizable revenue contribution in the third quarter. Meanwhile, vaccine rollouts are underway that analysts project will deliver billions of dollars—or potentially tens of billions—in sales for leading players in the coming years. Moderna's CEO has said his company could leap into the ranks of the world's largest vaccine players by sales this year.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/lilly-picks-up-871m-covid-antibody-sales-projects-blockbuster-contribution-2021>

Up the line to death: covid-19 has revealed a mortal betrayal of the world's healthcare workers

The covid-19 pandemic is taking a harsh toll on healthcare workers. In the Mirror newspaper on 20 January 2021: "52,000 NHS staff are off sick with covid." [1] Over 850 UK healthcare workers are thought to have died of covid between March and December 2020; at least 3000 have died in the US. [2-3] Worldwide, the death toll and the impact on the physical and mental health of healthcare workers are staggering. The long term costs are yet to be counted. But, a number of countries, mainly in Asia, have been able to manage covid outbreaks without sustaining any healthcare worker infections at all. [4-6] The means to do so are now widely recognised. They are costly and inconvenient to implement and require an acceptance of the predominance of aerosol transmission of this virus and its application in a rigorous, safety-conscious infection control system. [7] But it can be done.

<https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2021/01/29/up-the-line-to-death-covid-19-has-revealed-a-mortal-betrayal-of-the-worlds-healthcare-workers/>

Why America is ‘flying blind’ to the coronavirus mutations racing across the globe

The United States is doing so little of the genetic sequencing needed to detect new variants of the coronavirus — like the ones first identified in Great Britain and South Africa — that such mutations are probably proliferating quickly, undetected, experts said. The lack of widespread genetic sequencing means the window is closing to find and slow the spread of variants such as the one first spotted in Britain, which appears to be much more transmissible, and those initially detected in Brazil and South Africa. All have been discovered in small numbers in the United States.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2021/01/29/genetic-sequencing-mutations-coronavirus/>

Study finds that Brazil’s Jair Bolsonaro carried out an ‘institutional strategy to spread the coronavirus’

The grimmest timeline in the history of public health in Brazil emerges from an investigation of directives issued by the government of President Jair Messias Bolsonaro relating to the Covid-19 pandemic. In a common effort undertaken since March 2020, the Center for Research and Studies in Public Health Law (CEPEDISA) of the Public Health College (FSP) of the University of São Paulo (USP) and Conectas Direitos Humanos, one of the most respected justice organizations of Latin America, have collected and scrutinized federal and state regulations relating to the novel coronavirus, producing a brief titled Rights in the Pandemic - Mapping and Analysis of the Legal Rules in Response to Covid-19 in Brazil. On January 21, they put out a special edition making a strong statement: “Our research has revealed the existence of an institutional strategy to spread the virus, promoted by the Brazilian government under the leadership of the President of the Republic.”

<https://english.elpais.com/americas/2021-01-29/study-finds-that-brazils-jair-bolsonaro-carried-out-an-institutional-strategy-to-spread-the-coronavirus.html>

Novavax says Covid-19 vaccine is 89% effective in UK trial, but less so in South Africa

A new Covid-19 vaccine from Novavax was found to be 89.3% effective in a clinical trial conducted in the UK and appears to offer protection against some variants of the coronavirus, the American biotech firm has announced. The vaccine is the first to show it is effective against new variants during trials, with high levels of protection seen in the variant that first emerged in the UK and some protection against one first reported in South Africa. Novavax said Thursday that its vaccine -- which is administered in two doses -- was 95.6% effective against the original coronavirus strain, and 85.6% effective against the variant first identified in the UK, known as B.1.1.7, based on results from its Phase 3 trial conducted in the UK. This gave an average efficacy of 89.3%.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/29/europe/novavax-covid-vaccine-uk-sa-trials-gbr-intl/index.html>

Plitidepsin has potent preclinical efficacy against SARS-CoV-2 by targeting the host protein eEF1A

SARS-CoV-2 viral proteins interact with the eukaryotic translation machinery and inhibitors of translation have potent antiviral effects. Here we report that the drug plitidepsin (aplidin), which has limited clinical approval, possesses antiviral activity (IC₉₀ = 0.88 nM) 27.5-fold more potent than remdesivir against SARS-CoV-2 in vitro, with limited toxicity in cell culture. Through the use of a drug resistant mutant, we show that the antiviral activity of plitidepsin against SARS-CoV-2 is mediated through inhibition of the known target eEF1A. We demonstrate the in vivo efficacy of plitidepsin treatment in two mouse models of SARS-CoV-2 infection with a reduction of viral replication in the lungs by two orders of magnitude using prophylactic treatment. Our results indicate that plitidepsin is a promising therapeutic candidate for COVID-19.

<https://science.sciencemag.org/content/early/2021/01/22/science.abf4058>

Coronavirus Resurgence

COVID-19: UK reports another 587 coronavirus deaths - as vaccine doses rise by more than 600,000 for first time

Another 587 people have died with coronavirus in the UK, according to government figures - while the number of people to receive a vaccine dose has climbed above 600,000 in a single day for the first time. It compares to 1,200 fatalities announced yesterday and 610 last Sunday, and brings the total number of deaths within 28 days of a positive COVID-19 test to 106,158. Britain has recorded more coronavirus deaths than any other country in Europe and has one of the highest COVID death rates in the world, but the tally reported on Sundays is often lower due to a lag in reporting.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-uk-reports-another-587-coronavirus-deaths-as-vaccine-doses-rise-by-more-than-600-000-for-first-time-12204357>

Macron defends decision not to order third lockdown as third wave spreads

President Emmanuel Macron defended his decision to hold off on a third lockdown on Saturday, telling the public he had faith in their ability to rein in COVID-19 with less severe curbs even as a third wave spreads and the vaccine rollout falters. From Sunday, France will close its borders to all but essential travel to and from countries outside the European Union, while people arriving from within the bloc will have to show a negative test. Large shopping malls will be shut and police patrols increased to enforce a 6 p.m. curfew. But Macron has stopped short of ordering a new daytime lockdown, saying he wants to see first if other measures will be enough to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-france-idUSKBN29Z0U4>

One of largest cemeteries in U.S. struggles with wave of Covid-19 deaths

One of the largest cemeteries in North America is fighting to keep up with the demand for funeral services because of an uptick in Covid-19 deaths. Rose Hills Memorial Park and Mortuary in Whittier, California, covers over 1,000 acres, but families are having to wait up to five weeks for funeral arrangements, compared to the usual waiting period of five to seven days. "Many families have been very understanding about the backlog of services," said Patrick Monroe, president and CEO of Rose Hills, adding that the daily call volume for requests spiked a few weeks after Thanksgiving.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/one-largest-cemeteries-u-s-struggles-wave-covid-19-deaths-n1256239>

COVID-19: 'People in their 30s are dying' - exhausted ITU staff reveal brutal truth of coronavirus frontline

Hope and agony on the COVID wards. It's around 4 o'clock when seven ambulances arrive all at once. COVID-19 hospital admissions may have dipped slightly this week, but glimpse into Barnet Hospital's emergency department for a reality check. You will see we are still in the thick of a crisis. Domestic cleaner Larisa Atanasova, renowned in the hospital for her machine-like efficiency, can barely wipe down the bays quickly enough. She wipes and wipes and wipes; beds, rails, sinks and taps.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-people-in-their-30s-are-dying-exhausted-itu-staff-reveal-brutal-truths-from-covid-front-line-12202763>

COVID-19: More than 900 people in the UK died each day on average in first fortnight of 2021

An average of more than 900 people died with COVID-19 each day in the first two weeks of this year, according to new analysis. The second half of April 2020 - the peak of the first wave - is the last time there was a 15-day period as deadly, according to Office for National Statistics (ONS) data. However, January's average is likely to increase as more deaths are registered. Today marks a year since the UK's earliest known death from the disease - 84-year-old Peter Attwood from Chatham in Kent.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-more-than-900-people-in-the-uk-died-each-day-on-average-in-first-fortnight-of-2021-12202903>

Coronavirus: Is Northern Ireland exiting the Covid-19 peak?

The initial indications are that Northern Ireland is just starting to come out of the current peak of the

coronavirus pandemic. The numbers give plenty of cause for hope - but they also suggest there's a long way to go yet. The death rate is high, but has been falling slowly and hospital admissions have also dropped. Both of these things are positive but there are still hundreds of people in hospital with Covid-19. On a brighter note, the vaccination rollout continues and the spread of the virus has slowed.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-55862068>

Covid-19: France closes borders to most non-EU travel

France has imposed new Covid-19 border restrictions, but has once again resisted a new nationwide lockdown. All but essential travel from outside the EU has been banned, while testing requirements on travellers from within the EU has been tightened. PM Jean Castex said France's night curfew would be more tightly enforced and large shopping centres would close. But the measures were seen as mild and favouring the economy. Some doctors fear they will not curb infections.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-55863069>

Portugal close to running out of ICU beds for COVID patients

Portugal said on Saturday it only had seven vacant beds left in intensive care units (ICUs) set up for COVID-19 cases on its mainland, as a surge in infections prompted the authorities to send some critical patients to Portuguese islands. Health Ministry data showed that, out of 850 ICU beds allocated to COVID-19 cases on its mainland, a record 843 beds were now occupied. The nation of 10 million people has an additional 420 ICU beds for those with other ailments. The ministry said the number of daily infections was 12,435, dipping from Thursday's record, while there were 293 deaths.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-portugal/portugal-close-to-running-out-of-icu-beds-for-covid-patients-idUSKBN29ZOMI?il=0>

Parisians' relief as France avoids third lockdown

Parisians expressed their relief on Saturday (January 30) after French PM Jean Castex announced stronger curfew measures but no new lockdown on Friday night. Edward Baran reports

<https://www.reuters.com/video/watch/idOVDXEIFE3>

Bolivian doctors demand lockdown as COVID surge threatens health service 'collapse'

Bolivian doctors are demanding a nationwide lockdown and threatening to stop taking in new patients as a surge in COVID-19 cases, which they say is killing an average of one medic per day, strains hospitals to breaking point. New daily coronavirus infections in the Andean country, which received its first batch of Russian Sputnik V vaccines on Thursday, hit a single-day record of 2,866 this week and deaths attributed to the epidemic climbed above 10,000. "At the rate we are going, there will be a total collapse," said Ricardo Landivar, a director of the La Paz Medical College. "... We are going to have patients dying in the streets without being able to be treated by medical staff."

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-bolivia/bolivian-doctors-demand-lockdown-as-covid-surge-threatens-health-service-collapse-idUSKBN29Y1G4>

France can still avoid third coronavirus lockdown, Prime Minister says

France decided against imposing a third coronavirus nationwide lockdown on Friday and instead ordered tighter controls at its borders, increased police action against curfew breakers and a greater adherence to working from home. Prime Minister Jean Castex said the public health crisis remained of great concern as France's death toll jumped above 75,000, the seventh-highest in the world. "We know the grave impact (of a lockdown). Tonight, looking at the data of the past few days, we consider that we can still give ourselves a chance to avoid one," Castex said in a televised statement. Speaking shortly after President Emmanuel Macron conferred with senior ministers about the crisis, Castex said that from Sunday all arrivals into France from outside the European Union would be banned, except for essential travel.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-france-idUSKBN29Y2X5>

A year after COVID-19's arrival, India's active cases fall

India has around 170,000 active COVID-19 patients, the lowest since June 2020. It has reported 10.7 million infections and 154,147 deaths - one of the world's lowest fatality rates, attributed partly to its relatively young population. The country has recorded the highest number of coronavirus cases in the world after the United States and, with the likely true rate of infection even higher, one study suggests pockets of India have attained herd immunity through natural infection. India started its immunisation programme on Jan. 16, with healthcare workers and a target of reaching 300 million people by July-August.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-india-cases/a-year-after-covid-19s-arrival-indias-active-cases-fall-idUSKBN29Z0C9>

COVID prevalence in England high, not falling during lockdown - survey

The prevalence of COVID-19 infections in England remains high, the Office for National Statistics said in its weekly infection survey on Friday, finding that current levels of coronavirus cases had plateaued but are not falling. The ONS said that around 1 in 55 people had COVID-19 in the week ending Jan. 23, the same prevalence as reported the previous week. "In England, the percentage of people testing positive for the coronavirus (COVID-19) remains high," the ONS said.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-britain-infection/covid-prevalence-in-england-high-not-falling-during-lockdown-survey-idUSS8N2II073>

Portugal airlifts COVID patients to Madeira as hospitals near capacity

Ambulances under police escort rushed three intensive-care patients from overstretched Lisbon hospitals to a military base on Friday to be airlifted to the island of Madeira. As the number of patients in Portugal's intensive care units hit record levels, the regional government in Madeira said it had 157 beds to spare and could take people in even though it is also experiencing a spike in COVID-19 cases. Portugal's hospital system is creaking under the pressure of the world's worst surge in COVID-19 cases and deaths per capita, blamed on a relaxation of rules around Christmas and the rapid spread of the coronavirus variant first detected in Britain.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-portugal/tired-and-upset-a-lament-for-portugals-long-lockdown-idUSKBN29Y1NB>

Portugal extends lockdown and closes border over 'terrible' Covid outbreak

Portugal's parliament has voted to extend the current lockdown until the middle of February and announced the closure of its border with Spain, as the prime minister warned that the country is in a "terrible" situation and facing "the worst moment" of the Covid-19 pandemic. On Thursday, Portugal reported a record 303 deaths from the virus and 16,432 new cases. To date, the country has registered 685,383 cases and 11,608 deaths. The current lockdown, which came into effect on 15 January, will now run until at least 14 February. Non-essential services are closed, remote work is compulsory where possible and schools are shut. The Portuguese government also announced that it would close its border with Spain for two weeks from Friday.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/28/portugal-facing-worst-moment-of-covid-so-far-says-pm>

New Lockdown

Perth in lockdown, ending Australia's two-week run without COVID-19

The Australian city of Perth was ordered into lockdown on Sunday after a security guard working in hotel quarantine tested positive for COVID-19, ending the country's longest coronavirus-free run. From Sunday evening until Friday, people in the city of 2 million must stay home, except for essential work, healthcare, grocery shopping or exercise, with visits to hospitals and nursing homes banned, said Western Australia state Premier Mark McGowan.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-australia/perth-in-lockdown-ending-australias-two-week-run-wit-hout-covid-19-idUSKBN2A001R>