

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

15th Feb 2021

News Highlights

Israeli research finds Pfizer 94% effective against symptomatic cases

Symptomatic cases of COVID-19 dropped 94% in a sample of 600,000 people administered two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine in Israel. [The study, carried out by the country's largest healthcare provider Clalit, is the largest to date.](#) It additionally found the group who received the vaccine were 92% less likely to experience serious illness as a result of COVID-19 compared to a cohort of the same size with matching medical histories, who had not been given the vaccine.

Serious reinfection with variant identified in South Africa documented in France

The COVID-19 variant first identified in South Africa has cropped up in a case of serious reinfection in France, researchers have said. [A 58-year-old man experienced severe illness, four months after a moderate case of COVID-19 infection.](#) 'This case illustrates the fact that the variant may be responsible for severe reinfection after a first mild infection' according to the researchers. The case is an outlier at the moment, as most documented reinfection cases to date have been less severe than the first.

New variants spreading in the U.S.?

U.S. researchers published on Sunday a study '[reporting seven growing lineages of the novel coronavirus...all of them evolving a mutation in the same genetic letter.](#)' Growing concerns over new variants [are manifest in southern California, where new variant CAL.20C has been identified as infections surge there.](#) The findings add impetus to the need for global surveillance and vigilance to assess the infectivity and severity of new strains and the efficacy of therapeutics and vaccines.

WHO report over virus origins spark fresh tension between U.S. and China

The U.S. has expressed 'deep concerns' about how the findings of the World Health Organization (WHO)'s COVID-19 report may be reported, following its visit to China to investigate the pandemic's origins have been publicly released. [National security adviser Jake Sullivan said it was important any report be free from 'alteration by the Chinese government.'](#) China hit back, accusing the U.S. of 'pointing at other countries who have been faithfully supporting the WHO.'

Lockdown Exit

Israeli study finds 94% drop in symptomatic COVID-19 cases with Pfizer vaccine

Israel's largest healthcare provider on Sunday reported a 94% drop in symptomatic COVID-19 infections among 600,000 people who received two doses of the Pfizer's vaccine in the country's biggest study to date. Health maintenance organization (HMO) Clalit, which covers more than half of all Israelis, said the same group was also 92% less likely to develop severe illness from the virus. The comparison was against a group of the same size, with matching medical histories, who had not received the vaccine.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-israel-vaccine/israeli-study-finds-94-drop-in-symptomatic-covid-19-cases-with-pfizer-vaccine-idUSKBN2AE0Q2>

The show goes on in Madrid as cultural life continues despite pandemic

Madrid's Teatro Real opera house is busy preparing its latest productions in what at any time would be an ambitious season. With Spain battling some of Europe's worst coronavirus infection rates, its plans are all the more remarkable. The Real's premiere of a production of Wagner's four hour-long Siegfried takes place on Saturday while two other operas with largely foreign casts — Bellini's Norma and Britten's Peter Grimes — will be staged this month. The performances are part of a flurry of artistic activity that has continued in the Spanish capital despite the pandemic, as Madrid gives its answer to the question: how much should cultural life be closed down to keep the virus in check?

<https://www.ft.com/content/9e6795d5-438c-410b-ae6d-259b77d639db>

China's Lunar New Year plan shows what living with Covid really means

One year ago, things in China were very different. Around the time of the 2020 Lunar New Year people had already brought Covid-19 back to their families, hospitals in Wuhan were overwhelmed and doctor Li Wenliang, who tried to warn his the world of the virus, had passed away. This year, China's central government in Beijing has advised people to stay where they are for the holiday. The government hasn't banned travel but people are following official guidance. The number of passengers travelling during the three-day pre-festival rush fell 70 per cent year on year. Usually billions of trips are made across China for the Lunar New Year period. Train tickets sell out weeks in advance. Stations are mobbed in the days running up to the holiday. This year, they're not.

<https://www.wired.co.uk/article/chinese-lunar-new-year-2021-covid>

Masks no longer mandatory in Perth, as final lockdown measures lift

The last of Perth and WA's lock lockdown measures lifted at midnight (3am AEDT), meaning masks are no longer mandatory. It means the city — which was put into a five day lockdown alongside Peel and parts of the state's south-west on January 31 after a single virus case in a hotel quarantine worker — returns to pre-lockdown conditions. No new cases were reported yesterday.

<https://www.9news.com.au/national/coronavirus-west-australian-perth-lockdown-to-end-midnight-no-new-cases/c707cebb-e313-4a89-b095-1474063909f2>

Coronavirus: in Wuhan, a Lunar New Year rush to pay tribute to Covid-19's victims

Early on Friday, the first day of the Lunar New Year, shops in the central Chinese city of Wuhan were selling out of chrysanthemums as residents bought them to take to the grave or home of a deceased family member. Throughout Hubei province, of which Wuhan is the capital, it is a tradition to visit the household of a person who has died in the last lunar year to offer flowers and burn incense soon after midnight. This year, demand for the flowers for shao qing xiang or "burning incense" was particularly high, with many residents buying the yellow and white chrysanthemums to remember those who died from the coronavirus.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/3121659/coronavirus-wuhan-lunar-new-year-rush-pay-tribute-covid-19s-victims>

New Zealand to start coronavirus vaccinations on February 20

New Zealand's COVID-19 inoculation program will begin on February 20, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has announced, bringing forward the schedule after the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine was received earlier than anticipated. Pressure has been mounting on Ms Ardern to start vaccinations for the country's five million people in order to take advantage of its rare position of having virtually eliminated the virus domestically. "Last year we indicated the vaccine would arrive in quarter two, and earlier this year we updated that to quarter one," Ms Ardern said.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-02-12/nz-to-start-coronavirus-vaccinations-february-20/13148442>

Patient diagnosed with Covid-19 dies in New Zealand hospital

A patient diagnosed with Covid-19 has died at a New Zealand hospital, the Ministry of Health has confirmed, after being transferred from a managed isolation facility for treatment of a separate,

serious health condition last week. The person, whose death was not yet being included in New Zealand's official Covid-related death toll, was diagnosed with the virus after their admission to North Shore hospital in Auckland. The ministry said more information on the case would be provided on Monday, pending further investigations.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/13/patient-diagnosed-with-covid-19-dies-in-new-zealand-hospital>

Covaxin not finding international takers even when supplied free of cost by India

According to sources, of the 64.7 lakh Covid vaccine doses that have been sent out by India pro bono as part, only 2 lakh are doses of India's Covaxin. The rest are doses of Serum Institute's Covishield.

<https://www.indiatoday.in/coronavirus-outbreak/vaccine-updates/story/covaxin-not-finding-international-takers-even-when-supplied-free-of-cost-by-india-1768744-2021-02-12>

Exit Strategies

Japan Health Ministry says it has approved Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine

Japan's Health Ministry said on Sunday it has officially approved Pfizer Inc's COVID-19 vaccine, the first such approval in the country as it steps up efforts to tame a third wave of infections in the run-up to the Summer Olympic Games. The move had been widely expected after a government panel recommended approval on Friday, at which point Health Minister Norihisa Tamura said Japan would give its final approval as soon as possible. Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga has said vaccinations will begin from the middle of next week, starting with some 10,000 health workers. The government hopes to secure enough supplies for the whole populace - some 126 million people - by mid-year.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-japan-vaccine-idUSKBN2AE083>

Serbia donates Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines to North Macedonia

Serbia on Sunday donated a first batch of 8,000 doses of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines to North Macedonia, which is yet to deliver its first jabs. Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic and North Macedonian Prime Minister Zoran Zaev attended a border checkpoint handover ceremony of the shipment, praising friendship between the two neighboring Balkan states. Serbia, a country of 7 million, has so far vaccinated some 600,000 people, mainly with the Chinese Sinopharm vaccine and Russian Sputnik V, and to a lesser extent with the Pfizer jab. The country has been one of the most successful in Europe in terms of how fast it has rolled out the vaccine among its population. By contrast, North Macedonia, like most of other Western Balkan countries, has not yet secured a single dose of the coronavirus vaccine for its population of 2.1 million.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/serbia-donates-pfizer-covid19-vaccines-to-north-macedonia-pfizer-serbia-aleksandar-vucic-vaccines-vaccines-b1802083.html>

Covid: Vaccine given to 15 million in UK as PM hails 'extraordinary feat'

More than 15 million people in the UK have now had their first coronavirus vaccine, in what Boris Johnson described as a "significant milestone". The PM hailed the "extraordinary feat", reached just over two months after the first jab was given on 8 December. It comes as the government is expected to announce on Monday it has met its pledge to offer a jab to everyone in the top four priority groups in the UK. The rollout is now being expanded to over-65s and the clinically vulnerable. In a video, Mr Johnson praised a "truly national, UK-wide effort", adding that in England the jab had been offered to all those in the top four priority groups. Wales has also met the target.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-56062976>

Israel plans to reopen restaurants in March, restart tourism with Cyprus

Israel plans to reopen restaurants around March 9 and restart tourism with Cyprus as part of a gradual return to normality thanks to a COVID-19 vaccination campaign, officials said on Sunday. With more than 41% of Israelis having received at least one shot of Pfizer Inc's vaccine, Israel has

said it will partially reopen hotels and gyms on Feb. 23 to those fully inoculated or deemed immune after recovering from COVID-19. To gain entry, these beneficiaries would have to present a “Green Pass”, displayed on a Health Ministry app linked to their medical files. The app’s rollout is due this week.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-israel-idUSKBN2AE08N>

First Australian vaccines to arrive this week

Australia’s first shipment of Pfizer vaccines will arrive in the country later this week in a high-security operation, with the first vaccinations to begin within days after arrival. Health Minister Greg Hunt confirmed that about 80,000 doses of the first Pfizer vaccines would be exported from Belgium this week where they will arrive in Australia by the end of the week under tight security and be taken to a central distribution point. The Therapeutic Goods Administration will then complete final testing of the vaccines to ensure quality before doses are distributed around the country on a per head of population basis. They’ll be taken to hospital hubs and directly to aged care centres, with hospitals told to be ready to administer the first jabs from February 22

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/first-australian-vaccines-to-arrive-this-week/news-story/b14acc33ff41d916cda4b69e1eb02897>

Brexit Britain's victory over the EU on Covid vaccination is not what it seems

Britain got a month’s head start on the EU by approving the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine at the start of December, and then AstraZeneca’s at the end of that month. It had to accept the terms offered by the pharmaceutical companies, however, both in paying a higher price per dose, and by waiving their civil liability in the event of adverse effects. But, and there’s a very big but, the UK’s “success” is a really an illusion: because to be fully effective, the vaccine requires two doses. And only 0.80% of the UK population has received both shots, less than that of France (0.92%), and a long way behind Denmark, which has 2.87% of its population fully vaccinated.

https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2021/feb/14/brexit-britain-eu-covid-vaccination-fiasco?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Other

COVID-19: Domestic vaccine certificates 'under consideration', Dominic Raab says

Vaccine certificates to let Britons prove they have been inoculated against coronavirus are "under consideration", the foreign secretary has suggested. Dominic Raab sparked surprise by saying the idea "hasn't been ruled out", after it was repeatedly rubbished by some other ministers. The documents have been mooted given the fast-paced rollout of COVID-19 jabs, as attention turns to when and how restrictions can be lifted.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-domestic-vaccine-certificates-under-consideration-dominic-raab-admits-12217870>

Some foreign nationals are getting coronavirus vaccines in the United States

One of Mexico’s best-known TV hosts sat in a car, masked, looking straight ahead while a needle was plunged into his bare upper arm. Juan Jose “Pepillo” Origel was the latest Mexican national to get the coronavirus vaccine — by coming to the United States. “Vaccinated! Thank you #USA how sad that my country didn’t provide me with this security!!!” the 72-year-old star tweeted in Spanish on Jan. 23, along with a photo of his inoculation in the parking lot of the Miami zoo. Mexican social media users immediately savaged Origel, protesting that his ability to fly to the United States for the vaccine crystallized their nation’s vast inequities. About the same time, Florida health leaders, concerned that out-of-state residents and foreign nationals were flying in for precious doses of scarce coronavirus vaccine, moved to restrict access to people who live in the state full- or part-time.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/covid-vaccine-foreign-nationals/2021/02/12/7d5edbb4-6d2f-11eb-ba56-d7e2c8defa31_story.html

How India is delivering the coronavirus vaccine to its remotest villages

Vast distances, guerrilla warfare and vaccine hesitancy are just some of the hurdles India must overcome to vaccinate its 1.4 billion people against the coronavirus. Devjyot Ghoshal and Danish Siddiqui follow a feat of co-ordination as a vaccine makes a 1,700km journey to a rural health worker <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/photography/india-coronavirus-vaccine-villages-covid-b1795168.html>

How AI and data models help governments fight Covid-19

A not-for-profit business group including IBM and Rolls-Royce is using AI and data models to help Europe fight Covid-19 and help prepare an economic recovery. As Covid-19 vaccines roll out, getting economies and societies back to normal after the worst of the pandemic has passed will depend on collaboration between industry and the public sector – and harnessing the power of data and technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI). These are among the reasons why IBM, Rolls-Royce, Microsoft and dozens of global companies recently founded Emergent Alliance – a not-for-profit collaboration specialising in data, analytics and technology. Last April, data scientists and AI experts at IBM (Data Science and AI Elite Team) and Rolls-Royce (R2 Data Labs) joined a team to work on a crucial pandemic-related challenge: how to get a more accurate and up-to-date regional picture of Covid-19 cases so as to help local authorities mount a more effective response to coronavirus outbreaks.

<https://www.ft.com/partnercontent/ibm/how-ai-and-data-models-help-governments-fight-covid-19.html>

Pentagon approves 20 more COVID-19 vaccination teams

The Pentagon has approved the deployment of 20 more military vaccination teams that will be prepared to go out to communities around the country putting the department on pace to deploy as many as 19,000 troops if the 100 planned teams are realized. The troop number is almost double what federal authorities initially thought would be needed. Chief Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said Friday that Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin's latest approval brings the number of COVID-19 vaccination teams so far authorized to 25, with a total of roughly 4,700 service members. He said the teams, which largely involve active duty forces, are being approved in a phased approach, based on the needs of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/pentagon-approves-20-more-covid19-vaccination-teams-pentagon-ap-john-kirby-troops-country-b1801733.html>

'Unethical and unconscionable': Should young Americans get COVID-19 vaccine before poorer nations' most at-risk?

While images of people lined up for long-awaited COVID-19 vaccinations spurred hope in millions across the globe, they stirred up something else in Dr. Juan Jose Velez: frustration. Velez runs the coronavirus ward in one of the biggest public hospitals in Colombia, a country with one of the highest death rates and positivity rates in the world. While more than 152 million COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered globally, with roughly a third of those in the U.S., according to Bloomberg's vaccine tracker, Colombia is among a number of lower- to middle-income countries that still had not administered a single dose by mid-February.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/unethical-and-unconscionable-should-young-americans-get-covid-19-vaccine-before-poorer-nations-most-at-risk/ar-BB1dElqQ>

Why Canada is falling behind in Covid vaccinations

Canada has secured the world's largest number of potential Covid vaccine doses per capita - but it's struggling to get its hands on some of those doses and to get jabs into arms. On Friday, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau promised an "enormous increase" in doses coming to Canada of both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, the only two currently authorised for use in the country. He is under pressure from critics who say he has not delivered vaccines fast enough, and has promised that all

Canadians who want a vaccine will get one by the end of September. Canada's inoculation drive began 14 December, and the country has so far given just over 1.18 million doses. It currently stands at 40 in global rankings of doses per 100 people, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-56035306>

Covid passports could deliver a 'summer of joy,' Denmark hopes

Like many countries around the world, Denmark is desperate to reopen the parts of its economy frozen by the pandemic. The kingdom of under six million people has become one of the most efficient vaccination distributors in Europe and aims to have offered its whole population a jab by June. But before that target is reached, there's pressure for life to get back to normal for Danes already inoculated and to open up borders for Covid-immune travelers from overseas. Morten Bødskov, Denmark's acting finance minister, last week raised the prospect of a so-called coronavirus passport being introduced by the end of the month. "Denmark is still hard hit by the corona pandemic," he said. "But there are parts of Danish society that need to move forward, and a business community that needs to be able to travel."

<https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/covid-19-vaccination-passports-denmark/index.html>

Covid-19: How well is Northern Ireland's vaccination going?

Covid-19 vaccinations have now opened up to another group in Northern Ireland - those 80,000 or so people who were in receipt of a shielding letter because they are classed as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV). The vaccination programme is crucial in the plan to exit lockdown and get on top of the virus. But how well is it going?

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-56048229>

Covid-19 pandemic: Warning vaccine roll-out risks prolonging crisis

The Covid-19 pandemic is unlikely to end unless poorer countries can access vaccines, scientists writing in medical journal the Lancet have warned. Unprecedented numbers of doses are needed, the article says, but poorer countries lack funds and richer countries have snapped up supplies. The experts want to see production ramped up and doses priced affordably. It is the latest warning that so-called "vaccine nationalism" is putting lives at risk. At last year's UN General Assembly, Secretary-General António Guterres called the practice - when countries sign deals to inoculate their own populations ahead of others - "unfair" and "self-defeating".

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-56052497>

Virus in Reverse Across U.K. as Johnson Plots Lockdown Exit

The U.K. government said it is "confident" the country's coronavirus epidemic is shrinking, as the reproduction rate of the disease dropped to levels last seen in July. The latest so-called R number for the U.K. is between 0.7 and 0.9, according to official estimates published Friday, down from 0.7 to 1.0 last week. It means that on average, every ten people infected with the virus are passing it on to between seven and nine others. The last time the upper end of the range was below 1 was on July 31 last year, after the first wave of infections

<https://www.bloombergquint.com/onweb/virus-in-reverse-across-u-k-as-johnson-plots-exit-from-lockdown>

Covid-19: How England's hotel quarantine will differ from Australia's

England's rules on quarantine hotels for travellers arriving from Covid "red list" countries are less stringent than those enforced in Australia. The BBC has seen a copy of the government's official requirements for hotel operators ahead of the policy starting on Monday. It spells out the rules for handling travellers for 11 nights of quarantine. The UK government said its hotel quarantine measures were "in line with those in other countries". And it promised to update guidance for hotels "imminently".

<https://www.bbc.com/news/health-56030384>

UK ministers in push to boost COVID-19 vaccine uptake

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Saturday he was optimistic he could announce the easing of some lockdown measures soon as the government nears its target of offering vaccines to 15 million people in priority groups. The government says it is on track to have offered an injection by Monday to everyone who is aged 70 and over, as well as those who are clinically vulnerable, frontline health and social care workers and older adults in care homes. With infections and hospitalisations beginning to fall, Johnson is under pressure from some in his own party to set out when strict lockdown restrictions, which have caused the biggest crash in economic output in more than 300 years, will be eased.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-britain-vaccine-dr/uk-ministers-in-push-to-boost-covid-19-vaccine-uptake-idUSKBN2AC2M7>

'No One Is Safe Until Everyone Is Safe' - Vaccine Rollout Misses Key People

Homeless people, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and some people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds are among those struggling to get a coronavirus jab even when they're entitled to one. The UK's coronavirus vaccination rollout is being hailed as a rare pandemic success with the NHS on target to hit its goal of immunising 15m of the most vulnerable people by next week. But people are falling through the gaps because they face barriers to accessing healthcare. Experts say many of the people being missed out in the vaccine rollout are already at greater risk of health inequalities and have cautioned that until all communities in the population are reached with the vaccine, coronavirus cases will "keep creeping back". Charities and campaigners say the easiest route for people to be called for a coronavirus vaccine is by being called for one by their GP. But those with an unstable immigration status are often too terrified of registering with a GP or seeking medical care as they fear they might get reported to the Home Office and deported.

https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/covid-vaccine-rollout-misses-key-people_uk_6022c01dc5b689330e331b3f

COVID-19: Next phase of UK vaccine rollout 'may not meet the public's expectations', group of MPs warns

A lack of planning could affect the next phase of the coronavirus vaccine rollout, MPs have warned. The Commons Public Accounts Committee (PAC) praised the "world-beating" effort to get the jab to the most vulnerable, but said there is "much to be done" if the UK government is to hit its next target. Ministers are aiming to offer a jab to about 15 million people in the top four priority groups by 15 February, then a further 17.7 million people in the next five groups - including all over-50s - by the end of April. But a new report by the PAC said: "We are concerned by departments' lack of planning for the next phase of the programme and in learning the lessons from what has already been done that will be so vital to the programme's success."

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-significant-challenges-ahead-in-next-vaccine-rollout-phase-mps-warn-12215613>

Covid-19: C.D.C. Urges Reopening of Schools With New Guidelines

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Friday urged that K-12 schools be reopened and offered a comprehensive science-based plan for doing so speedily, an effort to resolve an urgent debate roiling in communities across the nation. The new guidelines highlight the growing body of evidence that schools can open safely if they put in effect layered mitigation measures. The agency said that even when students lived in communities with high transmission rates, elementary students could receive at least some in-person instruction safely — a finding echoed by an independent survey of 175 pediatric disease experts conducted by The Times. Middle and high school students, the agency said, could attend school safely at most lower levels of community transmission — or even at higher levels, if schools put into effect weekly testing of staff and students to identify asymptomatic infections.

<https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/02/12/world/covid-19-coronavirus>

UK social distancing rules could remain until autumn

Social distancing norms in Britain could remain until the autumn under plans being considered by ministers, The Times newspaper reported on Friday. The government's roadmap out of lockdown assumes people will have to wear masks and remain a metre apart of each other for months, the newspaper reported here. Scientists believed the restrictions may need to go on until the end of the year, according to the report.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/healthcoronavirus-britain-lockdown/uk-social-distancing-rules-could-remain-until-autumn-the-times-idUSFWN2KH1VZ>

Late April or May before lockdown eases with month of low cases needed before change

Level 5 restrictions will not be eased until very low Covid-19 case numbers are sustained for up to four weeks, according to multiple senior Government sources. Such a scenario could see the wider reopening of society, beyond schools and construction, pushed back until late April or early May. The concept of a "pause", where no easing takes place until numbers stay at a consistent level for a few weeks, is used in New Zealand and Australia and is viewed favourably by a number of Ministers as an effective indicator that it is safe to lift restrictions. The "cautious and conservative" approach enunciated by Taoiseach Micheál Martin in recent days is now widely accepted across all three Government parties. Ministers including the Taoiseach have accepted mistakes were made before Christmas, when measures were relaxed too early .

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/late-april-or-may-before-lockdown-eases-with-month-of-low-cases-needed-before-change-1.4482613>

Biden Announces a Big Vaccine Deal, but Warns of Hurdles

The Biden administration says it has now secured enough vaccine to inoculate every American adult, but President Biden warned that logistical hurdles would most likely mean that many Americans will still not have been vaccinated by the end of the summer. Officials said Thursday that they had arranged to get 200 million more doses of vaccine by the end of summer, which amounts to a 50 percent increase. That should be enough vaccine to cover 300 million people. But it will still be difficult to get those shots into people's arms, and Mr. Biden lamented the "gigantic" logistical challenge his administration faces during an appearance at the National Institutes of Health.

<https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/02/11/world/covid-19-coronavirus>

Partisan Exits

COVID-19: All restrictions must be lifted by end of April, lockdown-sceptic MPs tell Johnson

A group of lockdown-sceptic MPs has told Boris Johnson that coronavirus restrictions must be fully lifted by the end of April. In a letter to the prime minister, the COVID Recovery Group said there will be "no justification" for restrictions to remain once all over-50s have been offered a job. The CRG described reopening England's schools on 8 March as a "national priority" that must be achieved, and said pubs and restaurants should be allowed to open in a COVID-secure way by Easter. More than 60 Conservative backbenchers are said to have backed the letter, which demands that Mr Johnson commits to a timetable for exiting lockdown.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-all-restrictions-must-be-lifted-by-end-of-april-lockdown-sceptic-mps-tell-johnson-12217606>

Clashes erupt at rally against corruption, COVID-19 curbs in Cyprus

Clashes broke out between police and activists in Cyprus on Saturday during a protest against corruption and lockdown measures imposed over the COVID-19 pandemic, witnesses said. Police used water cannon and tear gas in an attempt to break up the gathering of several hundred people just beyond the medieval walls in Nicosia, the capital of the east Mediterranean island, Reuters witnesses said.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cyprus-protests/clashes-erupt-at-rally-against-corruption-covid-19-curbs-in-cyprus-idUSKBN2AD0I0?il=0>

Challenges to Covid-19 Lockdowns Have Been Mostly Losing in Court

When the owners of four Albuquerque trampoline parks sued New Mexico's governor for pandemic-related shutdowns that almost bankrupted them, they argued it wasn't fair that they had to close when tanning salons, guided balloon tours and ice-skating rinks stayed open. The argument got nowhere with U.S. District Judge James Browning. "The Court will not recognize a new fundamental right to operate a trampoline facility," he wrote in a Feb. 8 ruling, upholding the closures. The decision was the latest in a long line of defeats for businesses and individuals challenging lockdown rules and state emergency measures intended to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. Together, the roughly 300 civil liberties lawsuits related to Covid-19 represent the most significant test in more than a century of the emergency powers of state governors and the scope of liberty in dire times.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/challenges-to-covid-19-lockdowns-have-been-mostly-losing-in-court-11613212200>

Nigel Farage's anti-lockdown party: Future force or busted flush?

Love him or loathe him, Nigel Farage has proved himself a political force to be reckoned with. At the helm of first UKIP and then the Brexit Party, he was the arch Eurosceptic. But although the UK has now left the EU both legally and practically, Mr Farage isn't leaving the political fray. Instead, the Brexit Party has been reborn as Reform UK. It is the same legal entity, with similar branding and many of the same key players. But with the new name comes a new focus - criticism of the government's handling of Covid and, in particular, opposition to prolonged lockdown.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-56038343>

It Turns Out Germany's Anti-Lockdown Rallies Were Superspreader Events

Two anti-lockdown rallies attended by conspiracy theorists, anti-vaxxers, and right-wing extremists from across Germany were "superspreader events" that resulted in up to 21,000 additional COVID infections in the lead-up to Christmas. That's the conclusion of a paper by researchers from Humboldt University of Berlin and the ZEW - Leibniz Centre for European Economic Research in Mannheim, which examined the impact of COVID-19 deniers on coronavirus transmission rates.

<https://www.vice.com/en/article/v7mnb9/it-turns-out-germanys-anti-lockdown-rallies-were-superspreader-events>

French Mayor Opens Museums, Defying Coronavirus Orders

If you wanted to visit a museum in France this week, you were out of luck. On Monday, all — from the Louvre in Paris, to hundreds of local museums — were shut, as they had been since Oct. 30, when the government ordered them closed in the face of rising coronavirus cases. They remained shut despite a rising clamor from museum directors, who have begged the government to let them open their doors. "For an hour, for a day, for a week or a month, let us reopen," wrote the leaders of some of the country's most prominent art institutions in an open letter published in the newspaper Le Monde earlier this month. "Art can contribute to cure the soul, as medicine does," the letter added.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/12/arts/design/french-museums-perpignan-reopening.html>

Tories Pile Pressure On Boris Johnson Ahead Of Lockdown Review

The pressure on Boris Johnson over next week's coronavirus lockdown review is mounting, and mainly from his own MPs. That much was clear when an exasperated Charles Walker, vice-chair of the influential 1922 Committee, this week reacted to the suggestion that domestic summer holidays may not be possible by telling the prime minister to "get a grip of his cabinet ministers".

https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/coronavirus-lockdown-review-boris-johnson_uk_602697d4c5b680717ee731c4

Anti-lockdown protest outside Australian Open in Melbourne Park

Anti-lockdown protesters gathered outside the Australian Open in Melbourne Park on Friday night,

hours before the state's "circuit breaker restrictions" kick in. Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews announced a five-day lockdown from 11.59pm on Friday until 11.59pm on Wednesday due to a "hyper-infectious" outbreak of COVID-19 cases at the Holiday Inn Melbourne Airport. Victoria Police were at the scene including a line of officers and some mounted officers as hundreds marched through the CBD.

<https://www.news.com.au/national/victoria/news/antilockdown-protest-outside-australian-open-in-melbourne-park/news-story/ea6183d477ec839d23af8e39f73ffdad>

Scientist Warns Of New Covid Wave If UK Lockdown Is Lifted Too Quickly

Britain could face a coronavirus wave as big as the current one if lockdown restrictions are lifted too quickly, a scientist advising the UK government has said. Steven Riley, a member of the SPI-M modelling group, said that while the rollout of the vaccination programme had been "incredibly successful" it did not mean controls could simply be dropped. "No vaccine is perfect. We are certainly going to be in the situation where we can allow more infection in the community but there is a limit," he told the BBC Radio Today programme. "I think scientists are genuinely worried. We don't want to show that it is an excellent but not perfect vaccine by having another large wave in the UK. "Nearly 20% of the UK population is 65 years old or older. If you do some simple back of the envelope [calculations] for a vaccine that is very good but not perfect, there is the potential for another really substantial wave. That is not where we want to go in the short term.

<https://www.lse.co.uk/news/scientist-warns-of-new-covid-wave-if-uk-lockdown-is-lifted-too-quickly-y3ijreaqalbb6ex.html>

This COVID-vaccine designer is tackling vaccine hesitancy — in churches and on Twitter

Kizzmekia Corbett, an immunologist at the US National Institutes of Health (NIH), is one of the scientists who in early 2020 helped to develop an mRNA-based vaccine for COVID-19. Developed in collaboration with biotech firm Moderna of Cambridge, Massachusetts, the vaccine is now being distributed across the United States and elsewhere. And Corbett is taking on another challenge: tempering vaccine hesitancy by talking about COVID-19 science in communities of colour. Corbett is one of many Black scientists and doctors who are doing this outreach, often virtually, in their free time. Researchers say it's necessary to make scientific knowledge accessible in public forums, to ease health disparities.

https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-00338-y?utm_source=tw_t_nc&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=naturenews

Continued Lockdown

Germany to close borders to Czech Republic and parts of Austria in fight against new Covid variants

Germany is planning to close its borders with the Czech Republic and part of Austria as it tries to keep outbreaks of the more infectious UK coronavirus variant at bay. Travellers from these countries are likely to face a near total ban on entry to Germany, similar to the rules Berlin has already imposed on Britain, Ireland and Portugal. Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, is worried that the arrival of highly contagious mutant strains of the virus could undo her country's progress in bringing down the infection rate, which has fallen by two thirds since Christmas.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/germany-to-close-borders-to-czech-republic-and-parts-of-austria-in-fight-against-new-covid-variants-3cpc8qd29>

Coronavirus: Germans' mental health worse in second lockdown — study

People living in Germany are struggling with their mental health more during the current shutdown than they had during the first, according to interim research results published by Saarland University on Saturday. Researchers at the university have been monitoring 1,500 men and women for a year to measure the psychological and social consequences of the coronavirus pandemic. The time

period has spanned two lockdowns — the first in mid-March to mid-April 2020 and the second, which began in mid-December and is ongoing. Both lockdowns have seen much of public life curtailed, including the closures of schools, public institutions as well as shops and gastronomy businesses except for takeaway.

<https://www.dw.com/en/coronavirus-germans-mental-health-worse-in-second-lockdown-study/a-56557809>

U.K. Economy Suffers Biggest Slump in 300 Years Amid Covid-19 Lockdowns

The U.K. economy recorded its biggest contraction in more than three centuries in 2020, according to official estimates, highlighting the Covid-19 pandemic's economic toll on a country that has also suffered one of the world's deadliest outbreaks. Though the U.K. is grappling with a new, highly contagious variant of the coronavirus, Prime Minister Boris Johnson is hopeful that a rapid vaccination drive will permit a gradual reopening of the economy in the coming months, paving the way for a consumer-driven rebound later in the year. Gross domestic product shrank 9.9% over the year as a whole, the Office for National Statistics said Friday, the largest annual decline among the Group of Seven advanced economies. France's economy shrank 8.3% and Italy's contracted 8.8%, according to provisional estimates. German GDP declined 5%. The U.S. shrank 3.5%.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-k-economy-suffers-biggest-slump-in-300-years-amid-covid-19-lockdowns-11613118912>

Scientific Viewpoint

Lifelong immunity hope for Covid-19 vaccine

Trials of coronavirus vaccines for children as young as five are set to begin within days, laying the groundwork for a childhood immunisation programme that could protect people from Covid-19 for most of their lives. AstraZeneca started recruiting British children for a paediatric trial, with the first vaccines to be given by the end of the month. Pfizer is close to beginning a similar global trial. If successful they could pave the way for a vaccine programme on the model of measles or polio, in which a series of jabs early in life provide immunity lasting decades. A booster programme might be needed for the elderly. Professor Sarah Gilbert, chief investigator on the Oxford team behind the AstraZeneca vaccine, believes such a programme could reduce the consequence of Covid infection for most healthy adults to those of a cold

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/lifelong-immunity-hope-for-covid-19-vaccine-g3zs8v937>

China hits back after US expresses 'deep concerns' over WHO Covid-19 report

China has fired back at the US over allegations from the White House that Beijing withheld some information about the coronavirus outbreak from World Health Organization investigators. The White House on Saturday called on China to make data from the earliest days of the Covid-19 outbreak available, saying it had "deep concerns" about the way the findings of the WHO's Covid-19 report were communicated. China responded with a statement from its Washington embassy on Sunday, saying the US had already gravely damaged international cooperation on Covid-19 and was now "pointing fingers at other countries who have been faithfully supporting the WHO and at the WHO itself".

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/13/white-house-has-deep-concerns-over-china-role-in-who-covid-19-report>

Covid-19 may not have started in China, says WHO expert

The virus which causes Covid-19 may not have emerged in China, a World Health Organisation (WHO) scientist has suggested. Professor John Watson, who was part of the WHO team that travelled to China to investigate the origins of the pandemic, said the virus's leap from animals to humans may have occurred outside the country's borders. He told BBC One's The Andrew Marr Show that the pandemic most likely started with an infection in an "animal reservoir" which was then passed on to humans through an "intermediate host". Asked if he was sure the virus emerged in China, Prof

Watson, who previously served as England's deputy chief medical officer until 2017, said "no".

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/uk-news/covid-19-not-started-china-19836753>

COVID-19: Vaccines giving 67% protection after three weeks, large-scale research shows

One dose of a COVID-19 vaccine gives 67% protection after three weeks, a leading epidemiologist has said. Professor Tim Spector of King's College London, who runs the ZOE COVID-19 surveillance app, said data collected from 50,000 users vaccinated with either the Pfizer or Oxford/AstraZeneca jab showed one dose gave 46% protection after two weeks, rising to 67% after three to six weeks. The app uses information submitted by more than four million users across the world to predict and track coronavirus infections across the UK and other countries

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-vaccines-giving-67-protection-after-three-weeks-large-scale-research-shows-12217943>

Double masking can block 92% of infectious particles, CDC says

Double masking can significantly improve protection, new data from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows. Researchers found that layering a cloth mask over a medical procedural mask, such as a disposable blue surgical mask, can block 92.5% of potentially infectious particles from escaping by creating a tighter fit and eliminating leakage. "These experimental data reinforce CDC's prior guidance that everyone 2 years of age or older should wear a mask when in public and around others in the home not living with you," CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky, told a White House briefing.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/02/10/health/double-masking-cdc-study-escape-wellness/index.html>

UK's 'Professor Lockdown' hopeful there will be no further lockdowns

Britain's "Professor Lockdown" says the U.K. is on track to start loosening restrictions next month — and that he's optimistic there will be no need for further lockdowns in the year ahead. Professor Neil Ferguson of Imperial College London said the spread of the so-called U.K.-variant "has set us back a lot" but that he is hopeful following weeks of tough restrictions that primary schools at least will be able to reopen in early March. "We're in a better place than I might have anticipated a month ago," he told POLITICO's Westminster Insider podcast. "The lockdown has really driven down cases quite fast. They're basically halving about every 17 days at the moment or so, and that means in a month's time — the prime minister's talked about potentially reopening schools, we might have some bandwidth to do that, at least primary schools. And if we continue to see then a continued decline without large outbreaks, then perhaps starting to relax other aspects of society the following month."

<https://www.politico.eu/article/uks-professor-lockdown-hopeful-there-will-be-no-further-lockdowns/>

7 Virus Variants Found in U.S. Carrying the Same Mutation

In a study posted on Sunday, a team of researchers reported seven growing lineages of the novel coronavirus, spotted in states across the country. All of them have evolved a mutation in the same genetic letter. "There's clearly something going on with this mutation," said Jeremy Kamil, a virologist at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center Shreveport and a co-author of the new study. It's unclear whether it makes the variants more contagious. But because the mutation appears in a gene that influences how the virus enters human cells, the scientists are highly suspicious. "I think there's a clear signature of an evolutionary benefit," Dr. Kamil said.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/14/health/coronavirus-variants-evolution.html>

COVID-19: Previously-infected people only need one vaccine shot, say French experts

France's top health authority has recommended that people who've had coronavirus only get one vaccine dose. Those who have recovered from the virus have built an immune response similar to that brought on by a vaccine, said the High Authority of Health (HAS). It said a single shot would "play the role of reminding" the person's body how to fight the infection. The vaccines approved by

the European Union - made by Moderna, Pfizer and AstraZeneca - all stipulate two doses with a gap inbetween to achieve maximum protection.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-previously-infected-people-only-need-one-vaccine-shot-say-french-experts-12216693>

Coronavirus: Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine trial to begin in February for children

A trial to test how well the Oxford-AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine works in children is set to begin. Around 300 volunteers will take part in the trial, which will start at the end of February. The scientists want to see how well the vaccine works in children aged between six and 17 years old. Currently there are no plans to vaccinate children in the UK, but so far more than 14 million people have received one of the approved vaccines for coronavirus.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/56054311>

AstraZeneca teams with IDT Biologika to speed coronavirus vaccine output in EU

AstraZeneca is teaming up with German CDMO IDT Biologika to quickly speed output of finished COVID-19 vaccine doses. And their pact doesn't stop with this pandemic. To address Europe's "immediate vaccination needs during the pandemic," the companies agreed to work together to speed output of finished AZ doses by the second quarter of this year, AstraZeneca said Wednesday. Their newly expanded deal has a broader goal as well—helping secure "Europe's future vaccine supply independence" through combined investments in new capacity at IDT Biologika's Dessau, Germany, manufacturing site.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/manufacturing/astrazeneca-taps-german-cdmo-idt-biologika-to-pave-way-for-europe-s-future-vaccine>

After failing to deliver, AstraZeneca rethinks EU coronavirus vaccine supply chain

AstraZeneca is scrambling to find more manufacturers to produce its coronavirus vaccine in Europe after the drugmaker's bet on a limited number of sites fell short. By the end of January, only one continental plant — located in Seneffe in Belgium — was authorized to manufacture the drug substance for the vaccine coveted by governments across Europe, alongside two sites in the U.K. and U.S. After announcing the company would be unable to deliver nearly two-thirds of the 100 million doses it promised the EU by the end of March, AstraZeneca CEO Pascal Soriot initially pointed the finger at the Belgian plant, now owned by U.S. company Thermo Fisher Scientific.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/after-failing-to-deliver-astrazeneca-rethinks-eu-coronavirus-vaccine-supply-chain/>

White House cites 'deep concerns' about WHO COVID-19 report, demands early data from China

The White House on Saturday called on China to make available data from the earliest days of the COVID-19 outbreak, saying it has "deep concerns" about the way the findings of the World Health Organization's COVID-19 report were communicated. White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said in a statement that it is imperative that the report be independent and free from "alteration by the Chinese government", echoing concerns raised by the administration of former President Donald Trump, who also moved to quit the WHO over the issue.

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-white-house-cites-deep-concerns-about-who-covid-19-report-demand-s/>

Covid-19 pandemic: China 'refused to give data' to WHO team

China refused to hand over key data to the World Health Organization (WHO) team investigating the origins of Covid-19, one of its members has said. Microbiologist Dominic Dwyer told Reuters, the Wall St Journal and the New York Times the team requested raw patient data from early cases, what he called "standard practice". He said they only received a summary. China has not responded to the allegation but has previously insisted it was transparent with the WHO. The US has urged China to make available data from the earliest stages of the outbreak, saying it has "deep concerns" about

the WHO report.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-56054468>

Zinc, vitamin C show no effect for COVID-19 in small study

Consuming high doses of zinc and ascorbic acid (vitamin C) was not associated with improvement in COVID-19 infections, according to a small study published today in JAMA Network Open. In a 214-person, open-label experiment with COVID outpatients in Ohio and Florida, those who received one or both supplements had similar symptom-reduction periods as those who received standard of care. Over the years, scientific studies have not conclusively shown that either supplement can help overcome illnesses such as the common cold. Since the pandemic began, however, both supplements have seen an increased market owing to people's belief that they can give the immune system a boost. The New York Times reported zinc sales of \$134 million, and USA Today found that vitamin C sales reached \$209 million during the first half of 2020, up 76% compared with 2019.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/02/zinc-vitamin-c-show-no-effect-covid-19-small-study>

Oxford University to test COVID-19 vaccine response among children for first time

The University of Oxford has launched a study to assess the safety and immune response of the COVID-19 vaccine it has developed with AstraZeneca Plc in children for the first time, it said on Saturday. The new mid-stage trial will determine whether the vaccine is effective on people between the ages of 6 and 17, according to an emailed statement from the university. Around 300 volunteers will be enrolled and first inoculations are expected this month, Oxford said. The two-dose Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine has been hailed as a 'vaccine for the world' because it is cheaper and easier to distribute than some rivals.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-vaccine-astrazenec-idUSKBN2AD07S>

All hypotheses on Covid-19 origins still being investigated, says WHO boss

The World Health Organization says it has not ruled out any theory on the origins of the coronavirus pandemic, despite one top official earlier this week appearing to dismiss the idea it had escaped from a laboratory. Speaking at a briefing on Friday, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director-general of the WHO, said a summary report from the organization's team sent to Wuhan to investigate the origins of the virus should be published next week, with a full report coming soon after. But he confirmed that while the scientists made progress in understanding the circumstances around the outbreak in Wuhan in late 2019, more work was needed on all of the potential routes the virus may have taken into the human population.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/13/all-hypotheses-on-covid-19-origins-still-being-investigated-says-who-boss>

Statins 'cut risk of Covid death': Study finds cholesterol drugs taken by eight million Britons reduce chance of dying to virus by 43% in hospital patients

Statins tackle 'bad' blood cholesterol and they are used by eight million Britons A study has now found giving statins to Covid patients can reduce death risk The study was a review of 12 other studies into the effectiveness of statins in cutting mortality from coronavirus

https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9255021/Study-finds-statins-taken-eight-million-Britons-reduce-chance-dying-Covid.html?ito=social-twitter_dailymailUK

Virus variant first detected in the U.K. has been deadlier, study confirms

Scientists had already determined that the variant of the novel coronavirus first detected in the fall in the United Kingdom — known as B.1.1.7. because of its molecular makeup — was probably 30 to 70 percent more transmissible than the typical version of the virus causing covid-19. They also knew, based on preliminary data, that the variant appeared to be relatively more deadly for the growing number of people catching it. U.K. scientists now say the variant is probably 30 to 70 percent more deadly, based on a follow-up study by the government released Friday that assessed a

larger sample size of covid-19 patients and also found a higher rate of hospitalization.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/02/13/virus-variant-first-detected-uk-has-been-deadlier-study-confirms/>

England's current lockdown could be the last, says Neil Ferguson

The scientist whose data modelling led to the first UK lockdown has expressed hope that the current lockdown could be the last. Prof Neil Ferguson, who advises the government as part of the New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats advisory group (Nervtag), said the nation was “in a better place than I might have anticipated a month ago”. He told Politico’s Westminster Insider podcast: “The lockdown has really driven down cases quite fast. They’re basically halving about every 17 days at the moment or so, and that means in a month’s time – the prime minister’s talked about potentially reopening schools – we might have some bandwidth to do that, at least primary schools. “And if we continue to see then a continued decline without large outbreaks, then perhaps starting to relax other aspects of society the following month.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/feb/12/englands-current-lockdown-could-be-the-last-says-neil-ferguson>

New COVID variant with 5 mutations identified in California

A new SARS-CoV-2 variant, CAL.20C, has been detected in southern California amid a surge in local infections and is spreading through and beyond the United States, according to a research letter published in JAMA. Researchers at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center (CSMC) in Los Angeles analyzed COVID-19 strains before and after the surge in cases in southern California in October 2020. Before October, most coronavirus strains there originated from the 20C clade (group of viruses evolved from the same ancestor), which emerged in New York via Europe in the early stages of the pandemic. "SARS-CoV-2 will be with the global population for some time and has clearly shown its tendency toward rapid antigenic variation, providing a 'wake-up call' that a sustained effort to develop a pan-SARS-CoV-2 vaccine is warranted," the authors said.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/02/new-covid-variant-5-mutations-identified-california>

Coronavirus Resurgence

French hospitals to move into crisis mode from Thursday: newspaper

France’s Health Ministry has asked regional health agencies and hospitals to enter “crisis organisation” to prepare for a possible surge in coronavirus cases as a result of highly contagious variants, Le Journal Du Dimanche reported. The move, which would echo measures taken in March and November when France went into lockdown, involves increasing the number of hospital beds available, delaying non-urgent surgery and mobilising all medical staff resources. “This crisis organisation must be implemented in each region, regardless of the level of hospital stress and must be operational from Thursday Feb. 18,” the DGS health authority said

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-france-hospitals-idUSKBN2AE0EX>

New ‘do not resuscitate’ orders imposed on Covid-19 patients with learning difficulties

People with learning disabilities have been given do not resuscitate orders during the second wave of the pandemic, in spite of widespread condemnation of the practice last year and an urgent investigation by the care watchdog. Mencap said it had received reports in January from people with learning disabilities that they had been told they would not be resuscitated if they were taken ill with Covid-19. The Care Quality Commission said in December that inappropriate Do Not Attempt Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (DNACPR) notices had caused potentially avoidable deaths last year

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/uknews/new-e2-80-98do-not-resuscitate-e2-80-99-orders-imposed-on-covid-19-patients-with-learning-difficulties/ar-BB1dEddm>

COVID-19: New surge testing after more South Africa variant cases detected

Surge testing is being introduced in more areas of England after a few more cases of the coronavirus variant first discovered in South Africa were detected. The testing will be deployed in: Middlesbrough

within the TS7 postcode - Areas in Walsall - Specific areas in the RG26 postcode in Hampshire - People in these areas are strongly encouraged to take a COVID test this week, whether or not they have symptoms.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-new-surge-testing-rollout-after-south-africa-variant-cases-detected-12216867>

Italy tightens virus curbs as variant fears rise

Italy on Friday extended a domestic travel ban and tightened restrictions in four regions amid rising concern about the spread of more infectious coronavirus variants. In one of its final acts in office, outgoing prime minister Giuseppe Conte's cabinet renewed until February 25 a ban on travelling between regions that had been due to expire on Monday, a spokesman said. The regions of Abruzzo, Liguria, Tuscany and the autonomous province of Trentino were also moved up to the medium-risk "orange" category from Sunday, meaning that bars, restaurants and museums will be shut. The rest of Italy remains "yellow", with bars and restaurants open until 6:00 pm except for takeaway service, but with a nationwide night curfew.

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-02-italy-regional-virus.html>

New Covid-19 outbreaks in China reopen pet owners' wounds, but public pressure eases some lockdown restrictions

During early pandemic quarantines, many pet owners in China were forced to leave their pets alone at home or send them into the wild. Following public pressure, Daxing district in Beijing adjusted measures to allow pets to be moved to hotels with their owners.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/people-culture/social-welfare/article/3121322/new-covid-19-outbreaks-china-reopen-pet-owners>

Melbourne lockdown: How new circuit-breaker rules work as Australia tries to tackle rise in Covid cases

The Australian state of Victoria will be placed under a "short, sharp circuit breaker" after an outbreak of new coronavirus cases were linked to a quarantine hotel. A five-day snap lockdown has been issued in the southeastern state after 13 people tested positive for Covid-19 at the Holiday Inn near Melbourne Airport in quick succession since Sunday.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/world/melbourne-lockdown-new-rules-covid-circuit-breaker-869940>

Doctors blame virus outbreaks on shoppers' complacency

More than 35 Covid-19 outbreaks have been linked to supermarkets in recent weeks as consumers become complacent, health experts have warned. According to the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC), 35 were linked back to shops in Ireland in the last 11 weeks. Nineteen were recorded in the last month, with three in the last week. Dr Gabriel Scally, the president of epidemiology and public health at the Royal Society of Medicine, said there was clear evidence that shops are places where the coronavirus can be transmitted.

<https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/doctors-blame-virus-outbreaks-on-shoppers-complacency-40086220.html>

Covid-19: a first case of serious reinfection by the variant identified in South Africa described in France

A worrying first. Serious reinfection caused by the South African Covid-19 variant identified by French researchers. "This case illustrates the variant may be responsible for severe reinfection after a first mild infection" from the normal coronavirus

https://www.francetvinfo.fr/sante/maladie/coronavirus/covid-19-un-premier-cas-de-reinfection-grave-par-le-variant-sud-africain-decrit-en-france_4295555.html

New Zealand reports three new COVID-19 local cases, first since January

New Zealand on Sunday reported three new locally acquired COVID-19 cases, the country's first since late January, when a returned traveller tested positive after leaving quarantine. New Zealand's

minister for COVID-19 response, Chris Hipkins, said the three cases were a couple and their daughter in Auckland, and that genomic testing was being conducted to see if the family's infection was linked to any highly infectious variants. The new cases, the first since Jan. 24, forced Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern to return to the capital Wellington, skipping a gay pride event in Auckland that she was due to attend on Sunday afternoon.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-newzealand-idUSKBN2AE01M>

France not planning lockdown in eastern Moselle over COVID-19 variants

The French government has no plans for now to order local lockdown measures in the eastern area of Moselle to rein in the spread of highly contagious COVID-19 variants, Health Minister Olivier Veran said on Friday. Veran told reporters that a high number of cases of the South African COVID-19 variant had been found in the region.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-france-moselle/france-not-planning-lockdown-in-eastern-moselle-over-covid-19-variants-idUSP6N2K8004>

COVID-19 in retreat in UK, 'R' number below one for first time since July

The COVID-19 pandemic in Britain is retreating and the reproduction "R" number, which measures transmission rates, has dropped below 1 for the first time since July, adding to hopes that some lockdown restrictions could be eased next month. Estimates published on Friday showed that the COVID-19 "R" number for Britain is now between 0.7 and 0.9, a slight drop from last week's estimate of 0.7 and 1.0, and dipping under one for the first time in over six months. The prevalence of COVID-19 infections in England was also shown to be dropping in separate data released on Friday. The Office for National Statistics said that about one in 80 people were infected in the week ended Feb.6, compared to one in 65 people the previous week

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-britain-rrate/update-1-covid-19-in-retreat-in-uk-r-number-below-one-for-first-time-since-july-idUSL8N2KI4VG>

New Lockdown

New Zealand locks down Auckland after 3 new local COVID-19 cases

New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern on Sunday announced a three-day lockdown in the country's biggest city Auckland, after three COVID-19 cases emerged, the first local infections since late January. Level 3 restrictions will require everyone to stay home except for essential shopping and essential work, Ardern said, repeating the strict approach the country has taken over the past year in virtually eliminating the pandemic. "We have stamped out the virus before and we will do it again," Ardern told a news conference. New Zealand, which had gone more than two months without local infections before the January case, is to start inoculating its 5 million people against the new coronavirus on Feb. 20, receiving the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine earlier than anticipated.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-newzealand-austral/new-zealand-locks-down-auckland-after-3-new-local-covid-19-cases-idUSKBN2AE05Q>

Little risk of lockdowns outside Victoria, top doctor says, as rush to trace airline passengers continues

Australia's top doctor said lockdowns are not likely in other states, despite a rush to trace thousands of people who passed through a Melbourne Airport where an infected staff member worked at a cafe. NSW Health said it has sent text messages to about 7000 people in the state who were at Terminal 4 in Melbourne Airport where the cafe worker was with other states also working to identify people who could have been there. The person worked at Brunetti Cafe on February 9 between 4.45am and 2pm, Victoria Health says.

<https://www.9news.com.au/national/coronavirus-states-respond-victoria-lockdown-no-cases-nsw/e5afcefa-aa91-4150-b827-e1369fe7cb64>

Victoria's coronavirus lockdown sabotages terminally ill Australian man's year-long fight to get home

Terminally ill Australian man John Jobber is running out of time to make it back from Ireland and fulfil his wish of dying back home in Tasmania. After nearly a year of fighting to get Jobber home, his daughter Samantha John finally secured plane tickets to Melbourne for next week, but now she fears Melbourne's snap lockdown means he will never see home again. "I really do understand there is pandemic and it's a matter of balancing the risk, but, on the other hand, it's my dad," Samantha said.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/feb/13/victorias-coronavirus-lockdown-sabotages-terminally-ill-australian-mans-flight-home>

COVID-19: Australia's Victoria state enters snap lockdown after coronavirus outbreak linked to quarantine hotels

A five-day lockdown is being imposed in Australia's Victoria state, barring spectators from the first few days of the Australian Open tennis tournament. A new COVID-19 cluster has been linked to a quarantine hotel in the state capital Melbourne, reaching 13 cases on Thursday and prompting authorities to take action. Around 6.5 million people went into lockdown at midnight, lasting until the same time on Wednesday, in a state which endured one of the world's strictest and longest lockdowns last year.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-australias-victoria-state-enters-snap-lockdown-after-coronavirus-outbreak-linked-to-quarantine-hotels-12215664>

Greece extends lockdown to more regions to contain COVID-19 pandemic

Greece on Friday extended the full lockdown imposed on metropolitan Athens earlier this week to more regions of the country in a bid to contain the spread of COVID-19 infections, the deputy civil protection minister said. Effective on Saturday the region of Achaia in the northwest of the Peloponnese peninsula as well as Euboea, Greece's second-largest island after Crete, will be in lockdown until Feb. 22 at least, authorities said. This means schools, hair salons and non-essential retail shops will close. "The epidemiological picture countrywide shows a steady deterioration," Vana Papaevangelou, a member of the committee of infectious disease experts advising the government, told a news briefing.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-greece-lockdown/greece-extends-lockdown-to-more-regions-to-contain-covid-19-pandemic-idUSL1N2K11W>

Melbourne starts snap virus lockdown, no crowds at Australian Open

Australia's second most populous state Victoria entered a five-day lockdown on Saturday as authorities raced to prevent a third wave of COVID-19 cases sparked by the highly infectious UK variant.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-australia-idUSKBN2AD02D>

Australian Open fans are ejected from the arena as five-day lockdown begins in Melbourne after quarantine hotel outbreak lead to 13 infections

Australian Open is designated as a 'workplace' for players but with no spectators Fans were ushered out at 11.30pm half an hour before new lockdown took effect Outbreak has been blamed on infections leaking from a Melbourne airport hotel A guest's nebuliser allowed the virus to escape into hotel corridor, it is believed Five-day 'circuit breaker' is meant to stop a repeat of last year's long lockdown

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9252993/Australias-Victoria-state-hit-five-day-lockdown-UK-strain.html>