

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

27th Oct 2021

- **BioNTech to Start Building Vaccine Plant in Africa Next Year** - [BioNTech SE said it plans to start construction on its first start-to-finish vaccine plants in Africa in the middle of next year \(Rwanda & Senegal\)](#)
- **Thousands of Nicaraguans go to Honduras border for vaccines** - [Nearly 8,000 Nicaraguans received COVID-19 vaccines at two customs border crossings with neighboring Honduras in recent days, Honduran health authorities said on supplies of the inoculations in Nicaragua have run low](#)
- **New York City Inches Toward Covid-19 Becoming Endemic** - [Even though Covid pandemic has not gone away there are early signs of easing in terms of the severity of the disease - hinting of a endemic phase still to come](#)
- **Spurred on by the COVID-19 onslaught, Romanians are making up for lost vaccine time** - [Daily COVID-19 inoculation numbers have reached pandemic highs this month in the European Union's second-lowest vaccinated country, as Romanians respond to dramatic death rates and newly enforced restrictions](#)
- **How Moderna nearly lost the race to develop a Covid-19 vaccine** - [Moderna CEO Stephane Bancel explains why Moderna's success in developing a successful Covid vaccine nearly did not happen](#)
- **COVID-19 cases spike in Belgium; govt poised for action** - [Coronavirus indicators are shooting upward in Belgium pushing the government on Tuesday to consider re-imposing some pandemic measures that it only relaxed a few weeks ago.](#)
- **'Plan B' Covid measures could cost UK economy £18bn, documents suggest** - [UK Treasury documents leaked to Politico suggested that a return to home working, a key plank of Boris Johnson's "plan B" proposal to deal with rising Covid-19 cases, would cause up to £18bn of damage to the UK economy over five months.](#)
- **Vietnam to vaccinate children against COVID-19 from next month** - [Vietnam will begin inoculating children against COVID-19 with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine from next month, the health ministry said on Tuesday.](#)
- **Indians await WHO nod for homegrown Covaxin shot to travel abroad** - [Many are hoping that the World Health Organization will soon approve Covaxin, a key factor in Indians being able to resume international travel once more.](#)
- **Denmark's Covid Contamination Rate Rises After Restrictions End** - [The reproductive rate of the virus, known as the R rate, is now 1.2, up from 1 a week ago, which means the virus is spreading, Health Minister Magnus Heunicke tweeted on Tuesday.](#)

Lockdown Exit

New York City Inches Toward Covid-19 Becoming Endemic

Each wave of Covid-19 patients that has crashed through the doors of Long Island Jewish Medical Center in Queens has been more manageable than the last. In the spring of 2020 and the following winter, the hospital needed extra spaces to care for Covid-19 patients in need of oxygen and struggling to breathe. At the height of the Delta surge this summer and fall, Covid-19 patients didn't fill its ICU. "We're seeing it more as a chronic problem than as an immediate, huge pandemic problem like we were before," said Mangala Narasimhan, a critical-care pulmonologist and director of critical-care services at Northwell Health, a large health system in the New York region that includes Long Island Jewish Medical Center.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-york-city-inches-toward-covid-19-becoming-endemic-11635166801>

BioNTech to Start Building Vaccine Plant in Africa Next Year

BioNTech SE said it plans to start construction on its first start-to-finish vaccine plant in Africa in the middle of next year, aiming to build a manufacturing network that would eventually supply hundreds of millions of doses to the continent. The German company said it's developing the plans with the governments of Rwanda and Senegal, and initially the factory will have annual capacity of 50 million messenger RNA vaccine doses. The location hasn't been decided yet, and the company didn't announce a timeline for completion. The news comes as Moderna Inc. said Tuesday it agreed to sell as many as 110 million doses of its Covid-19 shot to the African Union following months of pressure, though most of the shipments won't arrive until the second quarter of next year. The purchase was made possible by the U.S. government giving up its place in the supply queue, African Union coronavirus envoy Strive Masiyiwa said at a briefing.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-10-26/biontech-to-start-building-vaccine-plant-in-africa-next-year>

Thousands of Nicaraguans go to Honduras border for vaccines

Nearly 8,000 Nicaraguans received COVID-19 vaccines at two customs border crossings with neighboring Honduras in recent days, Honduran health authorities said on Monday, as supplies of the inoculations in Nicaragua have run low. Promoting the vaccines for Nicaraguans, Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez wrote in a post on Twitter that "the solidarity and brotherhood of Hondurans crosses borders." He added that up to 500 doses were being given out daily to Nicaraguans. Honduran health authorities also pitched the cross-border assistance as a way to help beat back the risk of more infections at home.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/thousands-nicaraguans-go-honduras-border-vaccines-2021-10-25/>

Beijing Marathon postponed indefinitely due to COVID-19

The Beijing Marathon has been postponed indefinitely after Sunday's race was called off amid rising COVID-19 cases in China, the BBC quoted organisers as saying. Organisers said they were cancelling next weekend's race "in order to prevent the risk of the epidemic spreading (and) effectively protect the health and safety of the majority of runners, staff and residents," the BBC reported. The marathon was set to return this year after it was suspended in 2020 due to COVID-19. The Wuhan Marathon, which was due to be held last Sunday, was also called off with a new date yet to be determined.

<https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/sports/beijing-marathon-postponed-indefinitely-due-covid-19-2021-10-26/>

Exclusive: African Union to buy up to 110 million Moderna vaccines -officials

The African Union (AU) intends to buy up to 110 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine from Moderna Inc in an arrangement brokered in part by the White House, which will defer delivery of some doses intended for the United States to facilitate the deal, officials told Reuters. The AU's doses will be delivered over the coming months, with 15 million arriving before the end of 2021, 35 million in the first quarter of next year and up to 60 million in the second quarter. "This is important as it allows us to increase the number of vaccines available immediately," AU coronavirus envoy Strive Masiyiwa said in an email. "We urge other vaccine producing countries to follow the lead of the (U.S. government) and give us similar access to buy this and other vaccines."

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/exclusive-african-union-buy-up-110-million-moderna-covid-19-vaccines-officials-2021-10-26/>

Vaccine passports could fuel spread of Covid, says leaked government report

A leaked government document suggests vaccine passports could be counterproductive and fuel the spread of Covid-19, it has been reported. The government's impact assessment, seen by the Telegraph, suggests the passports could be "counterintuitive and potentially counterproductive" as they may push people from larger venues into poorly ventilated pubs. The newspaper also quoted the impact assessment as saying the policy would slash turnover for organisers of large events. It

estimated one month of Covid certification, which Boris Johnson has said could be rolled out as part of his "plan B" if cases continue to rise, could see profits of venues where they would be required drop between £345m and £2.067bn.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/covid-vaccine-passport-leaked-report-b1945218.html>

'Plan B' Covid measures could cost UK economy £18bn, documents suggest

Treasury documents have suggested that a return to home working, a key plank of Boris Johnson's "plan B" proposal to deal with rising Covid-19 cases, would cause up to £18bn of damage to the UK economy over five months. A government source said there was no suggestion restrictions would be that length, if they were introduced at all. Johnson has so far resisted a move to plan B in England, which would also entail more widespread mask-wearing and the extended use of vaccine passports. Instead, the government has said it will focus on ramping up booster jabs for the over-50s and vulnerable adults, as well as the vaccine programme for over-12s. The documents, leaked to Politico, were drawn up by the Treasury and the Cabinet Office's Covid-19 taskforce on the basis that a move to plan B would last until March 2022.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/oct/26/covid-plan-b-uk-economy-cost-leaked-documents>

Exit Strategies

Pediatric Covid Hospital Visits Plunge in U.S. as Schools Reopen

Hospital admissions are declining sharply among U.S. children with Covid-19, even more than adults, quieting concerns for now that the return to school could trigger a major uptick in viral transmission. Daily pediatric admissions with confirmed Covid have fallen 56% since the end of August to an average of about 0.2 per 100,000, according to Department of Health and Human Services data. Among adults, new admissions fell 54% to 2.1 per 100,000 in the same period, the data show.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-10-26/pediatric-covid-hospital-visits-plunge-in-u-s-as-schools-reopen>

African Union to buy up to 110 million Moderna COVID-19 vaccines -officials

The African Union (AU) intends to buy up to 110 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine from Moderna Inc in an arrangement brokered in part by the White House, which will defer delivery of some doses intended for the United States to facilitate the deal, officials told Reuters. The AU's doses will be delivered over the coming months, with 15 million arriving before the end of 2021, 35 million in the first quarter of next year and up to 60 million in the second quarter. "This is important as it allows us to increase the number of vaccines available immediately," AU coronavirus envoy Strive Masiyiwa said in an email. "We urge other vaccine producing countries to follow the lead of the (U.S. government) and give us similar access to buy this and other vaccines."

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/exclusive-african-union-buy-up-110-million-moderna-covid-19-vaccines-officials-2021-10-26/>

How to turn Africa from a vaccine desert to a vaccine hub?

The continent's life-threatening reliance on imports and donated vaccines has been laid bare by the pandemic, with a painfully slow and stuttering rollout of Covid-19 jabs. But that's set to change, with South Africa, Morocco and Rwanda among several African countries forging ahead with the technology and infrastructure to manufacture vaccines. The need to play catch-up in this pandemic and to boost resilience against future outbreaks of infectious diseases has catalysed efforts to boost Africa's homegrown vaccine production. "Relying on the West is not sustainable. Africa will always be at the back of the queue when it comes to accessing vaccines," says University of Cape Town senior researcher for the Vaccines for Africa Initiative, Dr Benjamin Kagina.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/optimist/vaccine-world/africa-covid19-vaccine-desert-to-vaccination-hub-b962326.html>

Covid vaccines: Man forced to get four Covid vaccines to avoid self-isolation as foreign jabs not recognised

UK residents who were double-jabbed abroad have reported feeling pressured to get a second round of Covid vaccines to avoid having to self-isolate if contacted by Test and Trace. The loophole first came to light after I reported yesterday that people who have received two doses of a Covid vaccine outside of Britain are still being made to quarantine for 10 days if they are pinged by Test and Trace. Self-isolation rules were scrapped on 16 August for people in England who have received both doses of a Covid vaccine and are identified as having come into contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/covid-vaccines-man-forced-to-get-four-covid-vaccines-to-avoid-self-isolation-as-foreign-jabs-not-recognised-1268478>

France says it has ordered 50000 doses of Merck's COVID-19 antiviral pill

France has ordered 50,000 doses of Merck & Co's (MRK.N) experimental COVID-19 antiviral drug for adults, the country's health minister Olivier Veran told a hearing at the French Senate on Tuesday. "France positioned itself very early in pre-ordering. France ordered 50,000 doses of the drug," Veran told lawmakers about molnupiravir, which is Merck & Co's experimental antiviral pills to treat COVID-19 ailments. Governments around the world are preparing to ensure they can cope any pick-up in the COVID virus as the winter season approaches in the northern hemisphere.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/france-says-it-has-ordered-50000-doses-mercks-covid-19-antiviral-pill-2021-10-26/>

CDC moves large European country to its highest level of Covid-19 travel risk

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has added just one new location to its list of "very high" risk travel destinations this week. On Monday afternoon, architecturally rich Ukraine, the second-largest nation in Europe in land area, was moved up from Level 3, or "high" risk for Covid-19, to Level 4, the agency's highest risk category. It's the second week in a row that the CDC has moved only one new nation to the Level 4 ranks. Last week, it was the modern city-state of Singapore. These last two updates in October are a far cry from the situation in early August, when the CDC added 16 destinations in one week to Level 4, and Delta variant cases were rising rapidly across much of the planet.

<https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/cdc-very-high-risk-travel-destinations-oct-25/index.html>

Spurred on by COVID-19 onslaught, Romanians make up for lost vaccine time

As ambulance sirens continuously pierce the air of Romanian cities as they rush COVID-19 patients to already full hospitals, queues are starting to form at vaccination centres. Daily COVID-19 inoculation numbers have reached pandemic highs this month in the European Union's second-lowest vaccinated country, as Romanians respond to dramatic death rates and newly enforced restrictions. In the capital Bucharest, Elena Serban, a 51-year-old garment worker had postponed getting the vaccine because she did not have health problems that would have threatened her if she got infected. Now, she has done it for safety.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/spurred-by-covid-19-onslaught-romanians-make-up-lost-vaccine-time-2021-10-26/>

Ukraine urges citizens to get vaccinated as COVID-19 toll hits new record

Ukraine's health minister urged more people to get their COVID-19 shots as coronavirus deaths hit a daily record of 734 on Tuesday, with hospitalisations up more than a fifth on the previous week. One of Europe's poorest countries, Ukraine fell behind in the race for vaccine supplies this year and so far only around 7 million in a population of 41 million are fully vaccinated. It is one of several countries in former communist eastern Europe, where vaccination rates are the continent's lowest, now experiencing a record-setting wave of infections with some of the highest death rates in the world.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-urges-citizens-get-vaccinated-covid-19-toll-hits-new-record-2021-10-26/>

Australian Open tiptoes around vaccination minefield

Torn between a love of sport, public health fears and Novak Djokovic's Grand Slam record bid, Australia is suffering a bout of hesitancy as it considers whether unvaccinated players should be allowed to compete at the Australian Open. For officials tasked with making such decisions, the ball seems to be in everyone's court but their own. After months of speculation, the position finally seemed clear last week when Australia's immigration minister Alex Hawke said athletes would need to be double vaccinated to enter the country

<https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/sports/australian-open-tiptoes-around-vaccination-minefield-2021-10-26/>

Vietnam to vaccinate children against COVID-19 from next month

Vietnam will begin inoculating children against COVID-19 with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine from next month, the health ministry said on Tuesday, as the Southeast Asian country begins reopening its schools following months of lockdown. Children aged 16 and 17 will be offered the shot with parental consent, initially "in the areas that had been under movement restrictions and densely populated areas where the infection risks are high," the ministry said in a statement. So far, just 22% of Vietnam's population of 98 million have been fully vaccinated, Average daily COVID-19 infections have fallen below 3,600 over the past week from almost 12,000 last month but schools in some areas, including in the capital Hanoi and in Ho Chi Minh City - an epicentre of the epidemic - remain closed.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/vietnam-vaccinate-children-against-covid-19-next-month-2021-10-26/>

Number of Washington workers getting shots continues to grow

The latest state and city of Seattle data shows the number of government workers getting vaccinated against COVID-19 continues to increase amid mandates. According to updated figures released by the Office of Financial Management, about 275 more Washington state employees have been verified as having gotten their shots since last week's Oct. 18 deadline, The Seattle Times reported. Gov. Jay Inslee had ordered state and school employees, as well as hundreds of thousands of health care workers, to be fully vaccinated by that date or lose their jobs. Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan and King County Executive Dow Constantine imposed similar policies. The figures released Monday also show slightly fewer state workers left or were fired over the mandate than agencies had originally reported.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-seattle-washington-jay-inslee-3fbb4a871764b0d5ce7116b9b079fcd8>

Partisan Exits

Raytheon warns of worker losses as companies impose vaccine mandate

Raytheon Technologies' top boss warned on Tuesday the U.S. aerospace and defense firm will lose 'several thousand' employees who refused to take COVID-19 vaccines, as it prepares to meet the Biden administration's Dec. 8 deadline for immunization. "We will lose several thousand people," Raytheon Chief Executive Greg Hayes said in a CNBC interview on Tuesday, adding that staff hiring was underway. The company has a total of 125,000 U.S. employees

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/raytheon-will-lose-several-thousand-workers-due-covid-19-vaccine-mandate-ceo-2021-10-26/>

Why people believe Covid conspiracy theories: could folklore hold the answer?

Using Danish witchcraft folklore as a model, the researchers from UCLA and Berkeley analysed thousands of social media posts with an artificial intelligence tool and extracted the key people, things and relationships. The tool enabled them to piece together the underlying stories in coronavirus conspiracy theories from fragments in online posts. One discovery from the research identifies Bill Gates as the reason why conspiracy theorists connect 5G with the virus. With Gates' background in computer technology and vaccination programmes, he served as a shortcut for these

storytellers to link the two. Gates is a persistent figure in the anti-vaccine stories. “He’s a great villain,” says the folklorist Prof Timothy Tangherlini one of the authors of the research. It’s Gates’ world-spanning influence in tech and then health that lodges him at the heart of a lot of conspiracies. “Bill Gates is in Africa, he’s in everybody’s house because everybody’s got computers, and then he’s pushing these vaccines.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2021/oct/26/why-people-believe-covid-conspiracy-theories-could-folklore-hold-the-answer>

Facebook froze as anti-vaccine comment swarmed users

In March, as claims about the dangers and ineffectiveness of coronavirus vaccines spun across social media and undermined attempts to stop the spread of the virus, some Facebook employees thought they had found a way to help. By altering how posts about vaccines are ranked in people’s newsfeeds, researchers at the company realized they could curtail the misleading information individuals saw about COVID-19 vaccines and offer users posts from legitimate sources like the World Health Organization. “Given these results, I’m assuming we’re hoping to launch ASAP,” one Facebook employee wrote, responding to the internal memo about the study. Instead, Facebook shelved some suggestions from the study. Other changes weren’t made until April.

<https://apnews.com/article/the-facebook-papers-covid-vaccine-misinformation-c8bbc569be7cc2ca583dadb4236a0613>

Facebook, YouTube remove Bolsonaro video over vaccine claims

Facebook and YouTube have removed from their platforms a video by Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro in which the far-right leader made a false claim that COVID-19 vaccines were linked with developing AIDS. Both Facebook and Alphabet Inc’s YouTube said the video, which was recorded on Thursday, violated their policies. “Our policies don’t allow claims that COVID-19 vaccines kill or seriously harm people,” a Facebook spokesperson said in a statement on Monday. YouTube confirmed that it had taken the same step later in the day. “We removed a video from Jair Bolsonaro’s channel for violating our medical disinformation policy regarding COVID-19 for alleging that vaccines don’t reduce the risk of contracting the disease and that they cause other infectious diseases,” YouTube said in a statement. According to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS), COVID-19 vaccines approved by health regulators are safe for most people, including those living with HIV, the virus that causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, known as AIDS.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/10/26/facebook-youtube-remove-bolsonaro-video-over-vaccine-claims>

Congress has bipartisan support to try to deal with the next pandemic. But those talks are already falling behind

Already, the federal government’s failures to prepare for a pandemic cost more than 700,000 American lives over the last 18 months. Public health experts have decried outdated data systems and supply chain vulnerabilities, and warned that without legislative action, all those problems will persist until the next crisis. They see a rare but fleeting opportunity to break the cycle of ignoring public health funding until times of crisis.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/10/26/congress-effort-address-next-pandemic-falling-behind/>

Scientific Viewpoint

Australia drugs regulator approves booster doses of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine

Australia’s drugs regulator on Wednesday provisionally approved a booster dose of Pfizer Inc’s COVID-19 vaccine for people above 18 years old as first-dose vaccination levels in the country’s adult population neared 90%. The booster dose can be administered at least six months after the second shot, the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) said in a statement. Further advice on the use of booster shots will be provided to the federal government soon by the country’s vaccination

technical advisory group, TGA said.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/australia-drugs-regulator-approves-booster-doses-pfizer-covid-19-vaccine-2021-10-26/>

Moderna Data Shows Covid-19 Vaccine Produced Strong Immune Response in 6- to 11-Year-Olds

Moderna Inc.'s Covid-19 vaccine was generally safe and induced the desired immune responses in children ages 6 to 11 in a clinical trial, according to the company. The Cambridge, Mass., company said Monday that it would submit the results to health regulators in the U.S., Europe and elsewhere in seeking authorization to widen the use of its shots to include this younger age group. The company announced the interim data in a press release, and results haven't yet been published in a peer-reviewed medical journal. Moderna's vaccine is currently authorized for use in adults 18 years and older in the U.S.

https://www.wsj.com/articles/moderna-data-shows-covid-19-vaccine-produced-strong-immune-response-in-6-to-11-year-olds-11635173936?mod=pls_whats_news_us_business_f

Opinion | Young Kids Should Get the Covid Vaccine. Here's Why.

Vaccines to protect young children from Covid-19 are likely soon on their way. An advisory panel for the Food and Drug Administration voted overwhelmingly on Tuesday to recommend that the agency authorize the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine for those ages 5 to 11. Why do we need to vaccinate young children against Covid-19? It's an understandable question. While many parents have anxiously awaited the opportunity to get their children vaccinated, others are hesitant. There are questions about side effects, as with any drug, especially considering the lower risk of severe disease for children with Covid-19 compared with that of adults. But just because Covid-19 is sickening and killing fewer children than adults does not mean that children are or have been free from risk.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/26/opinion/covid-vaccine-kids.html>

Pfizer Says Lower-Dose Vaccine for Small Kids Could Also Work for Big Kids

Pfizer Inc.'s lower-dose Covid-19 vaccine for kids under 12 appears to offer protection across the board, company officials said, and the drug giant may look into offering lower doses for teens who now get the adult dose. A scientific advisory panel to the Food and Drug Administration is deliberating Tuesday on whether to recommend the vaccine, which Pfizer makes with partner BioNTech SE, for 5- to 11-year-olds. If cleared by regulators, it would make a Covid-19 vaccine available to all school-age children for the first time. The proposed pediatric dose is 10 micrograms, or a third of the adult Pfizer dose everyone 12 and older currently receives.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-10-26/pfizer-says-lower-vaccine-dose-could-also-work-for-older-kids>

Becton Dickinson begins selling new at-home rapid COVID-19 test

Becton Dickinson and Co has partnered with Amazon.com Inc to begin shipment of a new at-home rapid COVID-19 test that can confirm results using an entirely automated smartphone app. The BD Veritor At-Home COVID-19 Test, which was authorized by U.S. regulators in August, also automatically reports results to federal and state public health authorities. "One of the unique things about this test is that it's really the very first test to actually have an interpreted digital result," said Dave Hickey, president of Becton Dickinson's life sciences business.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/finance/companies/becton-dickinson-begins-selling-new-at-home-rapid-covid-19-test/ar-AAPY2yo>

U.S. FDA advisers weigh Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine in children

An expert panel on Tuesday voted overwhelmingly to recommend the U.S. Food and Drug Administration authorize the Pfizer Inc (PFE.N) and BioNTech SE COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 5 to 11, saying the benefits of the shot outweigh the risks. An authorization for that age group would

be would be an important regulatory step toward reaching about 28 million children for inoculation, most of them back in school for in-person learning. The vaccine could be available to the younger age group as soon as next week. The FDA is not obligated to follow the advice of its outside experts, but usually does. The vote was 17 in favor with one abstention.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/us-fda-advisers-weigh-pfizerbiontech-covid-19-vaccine-children-2021-10-26/>

FDA to debate authorizing Pfizer's Covid vaccine for kids aged five to 11

Independent advisers for the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on Tuesday recommended the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid vaccine for children aged five to 11 – the first vaccine available for younger children in the US. Of 18 members, 17 voted yes and one abstained. Vaccines for children have been seen as crucial for protecting kids from the virus as well as slowing its spread, in addition to reducing the social and educational effects of school closing and attendance – and related economic concerns, such as caregivers' ability to work. The advisers weighed the vaccine's effectiveness, the social and physical effects of the pandemic, and the potential risk of rare side-effects like myocarditis, a type of heart inflammation. Data from Pfizer-BioNTech indicate the vaccine is 90.7% effective at preventing symptomatic illness among this age group.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/oct/26/covid-vaccine-children-pfizer-fda-kids-debate-latest->

S.Korea's GL Rapha certified to produce Sputnik COVID-19 vaccines

South Korean biotech firm GL Rapha has secured regulatory approval from Russia to produce and market the Sputnik family of coronavirus vaccines, the company and Russian sovereign fund RDIF said on Tuesday. The certification paves the way for the first overseas production of the shot to ease a supply shortage and allows GL Rapha to carry out the full production cycle, as opposed to other foreign manufacturers that rely on Russian-supplied ingredients. "This is the first time a foreign production partner of RDIF obtains a Russian GMP (good manufacturing practice) certificate," the two said in a joint statement.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/skoreas-gl-rapha-certified-produce-sputnik-covid-19-vaccines-2021-10-26/>

BioNTech to work with Senegal, Rwanda to make mRNA vaccines

Senegal and Rwanda have signed an agreement with German company BioNTech for the construction of its first start-to-finish factories to make messenger RNA vaccines in Africa. BioNTech, which developed the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, said Tuesday that construction will start in mid-2022. It is working with the Institut Pasteur in Dakar, Senegal's capital, and the Rwandan government, a statement said. "State-of-the-art facilities like this will be life-savers and game-changers for Africa and could lead to millions of cutting-edge vaccines being made for Africans, by Africans in Africa," said Matshidiso Moeti, the World Health Organization's Regional Director for Africa.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-business-health-rwanda-coronavirus-vaccine-f800599b45c433f09a03bdd625c46ddb>

Indians await WHO nod for homegrown Covaxin shot to travel abroad

Stuck in a village in southern India for nine months and unable to return to his job in Saudi Arabia, Sugathan PR is hoping the World Health Organization (WHO) will approve the Indian COVID-19 shot Covaxin, paving the way for his trip back. Like Sugathan, millions of Indians have taken Covaxin and many have complained of travel struggles as the vaccine has not been recognised for international travel by several countries.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/10/26/indian-who-covid-homegrown-covaxin-vaccine-travel-abroad>

BioNTech to start building mRNA vaccine manufacturing plant in Africa in mid-2022

BioNTech will construct a facility to make its mRNA vaccines in Africa in mid-2022 to scale up

production of its COVID-19 jab for a continent that has been largely left behind in the global rollout of vaccines. Planning for the facility has been finalized and “initial assets” have been ordered, the German biotech said Tuesday. That timing sets the Pfizer partner up to potentially beat out Moderna in building the first mRNA vaccine manufacturing site on the continent. Moderna said it plans to pump \$500 million into such a facility in Africa, but timing and location were kept under wraps earlier this month. “Mid-2022” is quite vague but at least puts pressure on the company to stick to a publicly disclosed time frame.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/manufacturing/biotech-to-build-mrna-vaccine-manufacturing-plant-africa-mid-2022-plans-finalized>

How Moderna nearly lost the race to develop a Covid-19 vaccine

Moderna Inc. has emerged as a biotech power — and a household name — thanks to its success developing a Covid-19 vaccine. But that outcome hides what happened along the way: The company came perilously close to being the biggest loser in the race for a Covid-19 vaccine. At one point last year, Moderna CEO Stéphane Bancel was overcome with sadness because he thought he had blown the company’s opportunity to produce vaccines to help stop the pandemic. I spent 17 months investigating how the Covid-19 vaccines were developed. I spoke with more than three hundred scientists, academics, executives, government officials, investors, and others who made the Covid-19 vaccines possible. Though developing a safe and effective Covid-19 vaccine in a timeline that many called impossible was a monumental effort, the Moderna story is a stark reminder of how thin the line can be between success and failure.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/10/26/how-moderna-nearly-lost-the-race-to-develop-a-covid-19-vaccine/>

Moderna says its low-dose Covid vaccine works for kids 6 to 11

Moderna said Monday that a low dose of its Covid-19 vaccine is safe and appears to work in 6- to 11-year-olds, as the manufacturer joins its rival Pfizer in moving toward expanding shots to children. Pfizer’s kid-size vaccine doses are closer to widespread use. They are undergoing evaluation by the Food and Drug Administration for youngsters in nearly the same age group, 5 to 11, and could be available by early November. The company’s vaccine already is authorized for anyone 12 or older. Moderna hasn’t yet gotten the go-ahead to offer its vaccine to teens but is studying lower doses in younger children while it waits.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/10/25/moderna-low-dose-covid-vaccine-works-kids/>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Denmark’s Covid Contamination Rate Rises After Restrictions End

Denmark, which has one of the highest vaccination rates in the world, has registered a rise in Covid-19 cases with several key indicators showing that the virus has accelerated in the past month. The reproductive rate of the virus, known as the R rate, is now 1.2, up from 1 a week ago, which means the virus is spreading, Health Minister Magnus Heunicke tweeted on Tuesday.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-10-26/danish-covid-contamination-rate-rises-after-restrictions-end>

Covid-19: with cases on the rise, will ‘plan B’ be enough in England?

Many experts have called for the reintroduction of some public health measures to reduce transmission rates. However, the government has repeatedly said it is not yet bringing in its ‘plan B’ for England. Madeleine Finlay speaks to science correspondent Nicola Davis about what it could entail and whether it would help us avoid the need for more stringent and longer-lasting measures down the line

<https://www.theguardian.com/science/audio/2021/oct/26/covid-19-with-cases-on-rise-will-plan-b-be-enough-england-podcast>

Queensland records two new community COVID-19 cases, a Gold Coast teenager and

woman in home quarantine

The Queensland Premier says the new COVID-19 cases detected outside hotel quarantine are a reminder the state is "not immune to the pandemic". Annastacia Palaszczuk said one of the new cases was an unvaccinated 17-year-old boy from the Gold Coast who had contact with a COVID-positive case that had travelled from New South Wales. Another was a woman in her 30s from Melbourne, who was in home quarantine. A third case — a truck driver from Gympie who travelled to Bundaberg — tested positive in NSW and will be counted as part of that state's figures.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-10-26/qld-coronavirus-covid-cases-home-quarantine-community/100551264>

Ukraine registers record daily number of COVID-19 deaths

Ukraine reported another record daily number of COVID-19 deaths Tuesday as vaccinations in the nation of 41 million people lags. Ukraine's Health Ministry registered 734 deaths in 24 hours, raising the country's pandemic death toll to 64,936. Ukrainians can freely choose between the Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna AstraZeneca and Sinovac vaccines, but just about 16% of the population has been fully vaccinated, Europe's second-lowest rate after Armenia

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/ukraine-kyiv-europe-armenia-astrazeneca-b1945500.html>

COVID-19 cases spike in Belgium; govt poised for action

Coronavirus indicators are shooting upward in Belgium pushing the government on Tuesday to consider re-imposing some pandemic measures that it only relaxed a few weeks ago. Daily infections in the nation of 11 million increased 75% to reach 5,299 case on a daily basis last week. Hospitalizations have increased by 69% to reach 102 daily cases. Deaths have increased slightly, with an average of 13 a day. To turn around this trend, the government and regional officials are set to decide later Tuesday to boost measures again, although stopping well short of a going into a lockdown. Indications are that authorities are looking at increased mandatory use of face masks and virus passports.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/belgium-brussels-covid-netherlands-kids-b1945441.html>

Half of children in hospital in Scotland with Covid-19 hospitalised 'because of' the virus

The figures, disclosed to The Scotsman via Freedom of Information legislation, stem from Public Health Scotland's own analysis of patients in hospital who were considered Covid-19 patients. Over ten months between September 2020 and June this year, the average percentage of under-18s in hospital because of Covid-19 rather than simply with the disease sat at 52 per cent. This is defined as being an admission to hospital with Covid-19 being the "primary diagnostic position within the first episode of the stay", with the figure rising to as high as 64 per cent in September and October, and as low as 33 per cent in February. In June, health secretary Humza Yousaf was criticised for allegedly "scaremongering" parents around the risk posed by Covid-19 to children after he claimed ten children had been hospitalised "because of Covid" during a row about the reopening of soft-play areas in Scotland. He later said he regretted if the statement had caused undue alarm among parents, and was slapped on the wrist by the statistics regulator for the use of "inaccurate" figures which were not available to the public.

<https://www.scotsman.com/health/coronavirus/half-of-children-in-hospital-in-scotland-with-covid-19-hospitalised-because-of-the-virus-3432332>

New Lockdown

Hong Kong to tighten COVID-19 rules, seeks to open to China

Hong Kong will tighten COVID-19 restrictions despite a lack of local outbreaks to better align with China's policies and increase chances of quarantine-free travel between the territory and mainland, leader Carrie Lam said Tuesday. It will step up contact tracing, such as requiring the use of its LeaveHomeSafe app in government premises to record the coming and going of visitors. It will also tighten quarantine rules to exempt only emergency workers or those in essential industries such as

logistics. Currently, those exempt from quarantine include airline crew, banking and insurance executives, directors of public companies, as well as crew members on cargo and passenger ships, among others.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/covid-hong-kong-china-carrie-lam-b1945293.html>