

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

18th Nov 2021

Lockdown Exit

Spain Plans Booster Shots for Health Workers, Elderly as Covid Cases Rise

Spain will roll out Covid-19 booster shots to health workers and people older than 60, as the country seeks to contain a surge in infections that's hitting across Europe. The move, which will be discussed with authorities in autonomous regions, aims to protect vulnerable groups, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said on Wednesday. He said the country's high vaccination rates of about 80% has so far shielded the former hot spot from the worst of the latest wave of the pandemic. Spain's 14-day average infection rate has climbed 67% in two weeks to 82 cases per 100,000 inhabitants, but it remains well below countries like Germany and Austria, where less than 70% of the people are vaccinated.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-11-17/spain-plans-booster-shots-to-prevent-relapse-as-covid-hot-spot>

Germany Pushes Work From Home to Counter Europe's Covid Surge

Germany's likely next ruling coalition is pushing ahead with tougher measures to tackle record increases in coronavirus cases, including requiring companies to let employees work from home where possible. The proposed law also in some cases limits access to the workplace to people who are vaccinated, recovered or provide a negative test, according to parliamentary documents published Wednesday. The Social Democrats, Greens and Free Democrats aim to use their Bundestag majority to get it through the lower house of parliament on Thursday. "The current pandemic situation in Germany is dramatic," Chancellor Angela Merkel told a conference of municipal leaders on Wednesday. "The fourth wave is hitting our country with full force."

<https://uk.finance.yahoo.com/news/germany-move-ahead-tighter-covid-091358396.html>

Europe Fights Winter Covid Surge With New Restrictions for Unvaccinated

It's getting harder to be a vaccine holdout in Europe and continue with life as usual. As governments battle another wave of the outbreak, new restrictions are being introduced, many aimed at the unvaccinated. That's adding to the pressure on those who've resisted the shot so far. Germany is proposing to limit access to the workplace to people who are inoculated, recovered or provide a negative test, and those who have refused shots are increasingly banned from cafes and hairdressers. The country, which has seen a surge in cases, has a vaccination rate below that of Italy, Spain and Portugal.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-11-17/europe-goes-after-the-unvaccinated-to-fight-winter-virus-surge>

UK health agency extends gap between infection and shots for children

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) said on Wednesday that children aged between 12 and 15 should delay getting a COVID-19 vaccine if they've recently had COVID to at least 12 weeks after they were infected. The advice brings guidance for 12 to 15-year-olds into line with that for 16 and 17-year-olds, who were advised to wait 12 weeks after infection before getting a shot when officials gave a go ahead for second doses for that age group. Currently, 12 to 15-year-olds are only advised to get an initial shot of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine, which has been associated with rare, mild and usually short-lived side effect of heart inflammation known as myocarditis.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/uk-health-agency-extends-gap-between-infection-shot-s-children-2021-11-17/>

Defense Department will help relieve 2 Minnesota hospitals

The Department of Defense will send medical teams to two major Minnesota hospitals to relieve doctors and nurses who are swamped by a growing wave of COVID-19 patients, Gov. Tim Walz announced Wednesday. The teams, each comprising 22 people, will arrive at Hennepin County Medical Center and St. Cloud Hospital next week and begin treating patients immediately, Walz said in a conference call from the Finnish capital of Helsinki. the latest stop on his European trade mission. Minnesota has become one of the country's worst hotspots for new COVID-19 infections. Hospital beds are filling up with unvaccinated people, and staffers are being worn down by the surge. Health Commissioner Jan Malcolm said Tuesday that she's ready to expand access to booster vaccines to all adults by the end of the week if the federal government doesn't act first. "Our best defense against this is the vaccine," Walz told reporters. He noted that Minnesota is No. 2 in the county for the number of booster shots given, behind only Vermont, and that first doses have risen 60% over the last week. "And we know that that is our way out of this. ... I need Minnesotans to recognize, as we've been saying, this is a dangerous time."

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-europe-st-cloud-helsinki-1617a75395447f671d56caed55645bde>

Sweden to introduce COVID vaccine passes for indoors events

The Swedish government plans to introduce a requirement for COVID-19 vaccine passes at indoor events where more than 100 people attend, a step recommended by health officials warning of a rising tide of infections in coming weeks. Infection rates have soared across large swaths of Europe in recent weeks and while Sweden - hard hit at times earlier in the pandemic - has yet to record a similar surge, healthy agency modelling suggests infections will reach a peak in mid-December. The centre-left government was preparing a bill to be put forward to parliament with the aim to having the vaccination passes in effect from Dec. 1, Health Minister Lena Hallengren said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/sweden-introduce-covid-vaccine-passes-indoors-events-2021-11-17/>

Mulled wine only for vaccinated at some German Christmas markets

At the Christmas market on Hamburg's main square this year, only revellers who are vaccinated against COVID-19 or recently recovered will be able to indulge in steaming hot mulled wine and candied almonds or gingerbread under festive fairy lights. The unvaccinated will still be able to peruse the bottle-green stalls selling handicrafts, listen to carols, ride on the merry-go-round or admire the nativity scenes.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/mulled-wine-only-vaccinated-some-german-christmas-markets-2021-11-16/>

Merck's Covid Pill Partner in India Sees a Short-Lived Boom

For a drugmaker licensed to produce Merck & Co.'s promising Covid-19 pill and sell Russia's Sputnik V shot, Dr Reddy's Laboratories Ltd. is surprisingly mellow about the rewards it expects from these medical breakthroughs even as virus waves continue to hit parts of the world. "Covid portfolios are going to be short-lived," G.V. Prasad, its co-chairman and managing director said in an interview at the company's headquarters in the southern Indian city of Hyderabad. "Life-cycles tend to be shorter, the opportunity will be very competitive, so I don't see Covid medicines as a driver of profit."

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-11-17/merck-s-covid-pill-partner-in-india-sees-a-short-lived-boom>

Exit Strategies

Stormont ministers approve use of mandatory Covid vaccine passports

Mandatory vaccine passports are set to be introduced in Northern Ireland after Stormont ministers voted by a majority to support the move. The PA news agency understands DUP ministers opposed Health Minister Robin Swann's proposal at the Executive meeting on Wednesday. However, the other four Executive parties - Sinn Fein SDLP, Alliance and Mr Swann's UUP - backed the move. Mr Swann wants to see enforceable Covid certification in operation across a range of hospitality

settings from December 13.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/dup-stormont-northern-ireland-sinn-fein-department-of-health-b966783.html>

'An absolute scandal': UK threw away 600,000 vaccine doses after they passed expiry date

The UK threw away more than 600,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine after the life-saving jabs were allowed to pass their expiry date, The Independent can reveal. In what has been described as an "absolute scandal", the government failed to donate the doses to poorer countries struggling to access Covid vaccines – despite previous promises to redistribute supplies that were deemed surplus to requirements in the UK. The doses were no longer needed in Britain after the decision was made in May to stop offering the AstraZeneca vaccine to younger age groups because of concerns over rare blood clotting. This left an excess of vaccines, 604,400 of which eventually expired in August before being destroyed at the end of the month, according to data obtained by a Freedom of Information request. Labour said it was "staggering that such a colossal quantity of life-saving jabs were allowed to go to waste", while Oxfam said it was "disgraceful" that doses were destroyed while health workers on the front line in poorer countries remained unprotected against Covid-19.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/covid-vaccine-doses-astrazeneca-donations-uk-b1958000.html>

Biden administration seeks to boost Covid-19 vaccine manufacturing to increase global supply

The Biden administration is seeking to boost Covid-19 vaccine manufacturing to increase the global vaccine supply, particularly in developing nations, as the US continues its efforts to share more vaccines abroad. "We are prepared to offer vaccine manufacturers who have demonstrated the capability to make mRNA vaccines substantial government resources to help them expand their domestic infrastructure and capacity (such as facilities, equipment, staff, or training) in order to make an additional 1 billion doses of vaccine available per year," an administration official said. The official added, "In the short term, this would make a significant amount of Covid-19 vaccine doses available at cost for global use, and in the long term, it would help establish sustained domestic manufacturing capacity to rapidly produce vaccines for future threats. We hope companies will take us up on this plan to help get more people here at home and around the world vaccinated."

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/17/politics/covid-vaccine-manufacturing/index.html>

Fauci says boosters for all key to U.S. reaching COVID-19 endemic level

Top U.S. infectious disease official Dr. Anthony Fauci said on Tuesday it is possible for COVID-19 to be reduced to an endemic illness from the current health emergency next year if the country ramps up vaccination rates. Booster doses of the COVID-19 vaccines are vital for reaching that point, Fauci said in an interview during the Reuters Total Health conference, which runs virtually from Nov. 15-18. Experts believe COVID-19 cannot be eliminated and will likely become endemic, meaning it will always be present in the population to some degree, such as the flu or chickenpox

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/fauci-says-us-can-reach-covid-endemic-level-rather-than-pandemic-next-year-2021-11-16/>

Swedish health agency backtracks on reduced COVID testing

Sweden's Public Health Agency said on Wednesday it would reverse a widely-criticized decision to stop recommending testing for people who are fully vaccinated but show symptoms of COVID-19. COVID-19 testing in Sweden has fallen by some 35% after the health agency announced in October that people displaying symptoms no longer needed to get tested if they were fully vaccinated against the virus. "The Public Health Agency has decided to recommend that the regions offer testing to everyone who is 6 years and older who gets symptoms that may be COVID-19," it said in a statement.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/swedish-health-agency-backtracks-reduced-covid-testing-2021-11-17/>

French govt science adviser: may need more to work-from-home to fight rise in COVID

The French government's top scientific adviser Jean-Francois Delfraissy said on Wednesday he could not rule out authorities asking companies once again to make a greater use of home-working, amid a surge in COVID-19 infections in France. Asked if the French government could again recommend employers to ask their staff to work more from home, Delfraissy told France Inter radio: "Probably yes...home-working is one element of our toolbox."

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/french-govt-science-adviser-may-need-more-work-from-home-fight-rise-covid-2021-11-17/>

New Zealand to ease Auckland domestic border curbs in mid-Dec

Domestic borders around New Zealand's largest city Auckland will reopen from Dec. 15 for fully vaccinated people and those with negative COVID-19 test results, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said on Wednesday. Auckland is the epicentre of an outbreak of the infectious Delta variant of the COVID-19 and been locked off from the rest of the country for over 90 days now. But with more than 80% of Auckland and the rest of country fully vaccinated it was time to open up the ability to travel again, Ardern said at a news conference.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/new-zealand-ease-auckland-domestic-border-curbs-dec-15-2021-11-17/>

White House: 10% of kids have been vaccinated in 1st 2 weeks

The White House says about 10% of eligible kids aged 5 to 11 have received a dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine since its approval for their age group two weeks ago. At least 2.6 million kids have received a shot, White House COVID-19 coordinator Jeff Zients said Wednesday, with 1.7 million doses administered in the last week alone, roughly double the pace of the first week after approval. It's more than three times faster than the rate adults were vaccinated at the start of the nation's vaccination campaign 11 months ago. Zients said there are now 30,000 locations across for kids to get a shot, up from 20,000 last week, and that the administration expects the pace of pediatric shots to pick up in the coming days.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-a0e660fbc7cf85cd2f070ca9630e30e2>

US readies billions to boost COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing capacity: NYT

The COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing push is far from over. Just ask the Biden administration, which is reportedly looking to spend billions to churn out as many shot doses as possible next year. The White House is ready to shell out billions to expand domestic manufacturing capacity for COVID-19 vaccines, The New York Times reports, citing two of President Joe Biden's top advisers. The outlay marks the first step in a new plan to be unveiled Wednesday, the Times reports. Under the strategy, the government plans to team up with the industry to tackle variant concerns at home and abroad, as well as to prepare for future pandemics, coronavirus response coordinator Jeff Zients and David Kessler, M.D., who spearheads vaccine distribution for the administration, told the newspaper.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/manufacturing/us-readies-billions-to-boost-covid-19-vaccine-manufacturing-capacity-nyt>

Fauci on the next phase of the Covid-19 pandemic and the 'insanity' of the threats he faces for pushing masks, vaccines

Anthony Fauci, the country's top infectious disease expert who himself has become a something of a Rorschach test for people's views on the pandemic, warned that the politicization of the Covid-19 response threatens the country's ability to withstand future health emergencies, even at a time of great scientific progress. "How do you change a mindset in a country that is completely antithetical to a response to an outbreak?" Fauci said Tuesday at the STAT Summit. "If ever there was any phenomenon that required people pulling together in a society, it's an outbreak that's killing hundreds of thousands of people. I don't know how we're going to get that divisiveness behind us."

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/11/16/fauci-interview-insanity-covid-stat-summit/>

Partisan Exits

The Ottawa Senators Have a 100% Vaccination Rate—and 40% of the Team Has Tested Positive for Covid

A substantial Covid-19 outbreak that this week has sidelined the National Hockey League's Ottawa Senators—despite the entire team being vaccinated—carries a warning for the coming months of professional sports: even with blanket immunization, pandemic disruptions are far from over. The NHL announced the suspension of the Senators' season through at least Nov. 20 after 10 players and one coach tested positive in recent days. The team says it is fully vaccinated, but hasn't specified which shots players have received.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/ottawa-senators-covid-11637123408>

Nearly 100 Maryland students get wrong COVID vaccine dose

Nearly 100 Maryland elementary school students received an incorrect dose of the coronavirus vaccine at a clinic last week, health officials announced Monday. Officials were notifying the parents of 98 students at South Lake Elementary School by telephone that doses of vaccine administered at a clinic at the Montgomery Village school Nov. 10 were diluted more than recommended, the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services said in a news release. Students can get additional doses at a clinic Wednesday. A staffer realized their mistake and notified officials, the department said. State officials and Pfizer recommended an additional dose for students as soon as possible. Acting county Health Officer Dr. James Bridgers said staff already received more training on children's doses.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-maryland-30ad6b2e09bb87d05d3b2fb5ff371bc0>

Lawsuits challenging Biden workplace vaccine rule sent to 6th Circuit

A judicial panel on Tuesday consolidated 34 lawsuits challenging the Biden administration's workplace COVID-19 vaccine rule in the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, a venue favored by opponents of the rule. President Joe Biden announced plans for the vaccine requirement in September, seeking to stem a surge in COVID-19 cases and get more people back to work.

<https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/court-lottery-gives-biden-administration-chance-revive-covid-vaccine-mandate-2021-11-16/>

GOP opposition to vaccine mandates extends far beyond Covid-19

Right-wing politicians' resistance to vaccine mandates is extending far beyond Covid-19 immunizations, a startling new development that carries vast implications for the future of public health. In Idaho, a lawmaker introduced a bill that would define vaccine mandates — of any kind — as a form of assault. In Florida, a prominent state senator has called for a review of all vaccine requirements, including those for immunizations that have enjoyed wide public acceptance for decades, like polio and the measles, mumps, and rubella shot. And in Montana, the Republican governor recently signed into law a new bill that forbids businesses, including hospitals, from enforcing any vaccination requirements as a condition of employment.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/11/17/gop-opposition-to-vaccine-mandates-extends-far-beyond-covid-19/>

Scientific Viewpoint

Moderna seeks U.S. authorization of COVID-19 booster shots for all adults

Moderna Inc said on Wednesday it had applied with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for authorization of its COVID-19 booster vaccine for all adults aged 18 and older. The FDA has cleared booster shots of COVID-19 vaccines for people who are immunocompromised, those aged 65 and older and for individuals at high risk of severe disease or who are regularly exposed to the virus. Moderna is seeking authorization for a 50-microgram booster dose, half the strength of its original vaccine given in two shots about four weeks apart. The filing comes a week after Pfizer Inc applied for a similar clearance for the booster doses of the vaccine it has developed with German partner

BioNTech.

<https://uk.news.yahoo.com/moderna-seeks-u-authorization-covid-183012979.html>

Atrial fibrillation significantly increases a person's risk of serious complications and death from COVID-19

A new study from researchers at Intermountain Healthcare in Salt Lake City finds that patients with atrial fibrillation, the most common type of heart arrhythmia in adults, are at significantly higher risk to experience serious complications from COVID-19 illness. The study found that patients with a history of atrial fibrillation who have COVID-19 illness are not only more likely to need hospitalization, ICU and ventilator support, but nearly 62% more likely to suffer a major cardiovascular event, such as a heart failure hospitalization, and 40% more likely to die than individuals who don't have a history of atrial fibrillation.

<https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/935280>

FDA promises quick review of Pfizer booster for all adults, CDC meets Friday

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said on Tuesday it would review Pfizer Inc's request to authorize booster doses of COVID-19 vaccine in all adults "as expeditiously as possible," with the New York Times reporting that the regulatory nod could come as soon as Thursday.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/cdc-advisers-review-data-wider-use-pfizer-biontech-covid-19-vaccine-2021-11-16/>

Pfizer files for U.S. authorization of promising COVID-19 antiviral pill

Pfizer Inc said on Tuesday it is seeking U.S. authorization of its experimental antiviral COVID-19 pill that cut the chance of hospitalization or death for adults at risk of severe disease by 89% in a clinical trial. Pfizer said it completed submission of its application for emergency use authorization of the drug, Paxlovid, with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, including data from the drugmaker's clinical trial.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/pfizer-files-us-authorization-covid-19-pill-2021-11-16/>

Philippines approves emergency use of Novavax COVID-19 vaccine

The Philippines has approved the emergency use of a COVID-19 vaccine by Novavax Inc, its food and drug agency chief said on Wednesday, the ninth vaccine approved in the Southeast Asian country. The nanoparticle vaccine, under the brand name Covovax, will be manufactured by Serum Institute of India, and is approved for use on adults 18 and above, the agency's chief Rolando Enrique Domingo told a public briefing. Covovax, which had efficacy of 89.7% in clinical trials, will be administered in two doses not less than 21 days apart, Domingo added.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/philippines-approves-emergency-use-novavax-covid-19-vaccine-2021-11-17/>

EU regulator expects decision on Novavax COVID-19 shot in weeks

The European Union's drug regulator said on Wednesday it could decide on Novavax's COVID-19 vaccine approval "within weeks" if the data it has received from the drugmaker was sufficient to prove the shot's effectiveness. The protein-based vaccine, branded Nuvaxovid, has been under a rolling review since February, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) said. Such reviews allow for a speedy approval.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/eu-regulator-expects-decision-novavax-covid-19-shot-weeks-2021-11-17/>

Roche walks away from Atea partnership to develop COVID-19 pill

Roche Holding AG has ended a partnership with Atea Pharmaceuticals Inc to jointly develop a COVID-19 antiviral pill, the Swiss drugmaker said on Tuesday, a month after the drug failed to help patients in a small study. Boston-based Atea's shares fell 11% to \$10.08 in extended trading, set to

add to the 72% slump this year. Many companies are racing to develop an oral pill as it can be taken as an early at-home treatment to help prevent COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths, a promising new weapon in the fight against the pandemic.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/atea-pharma-says-deal-develop-covid-19-pill-with-roche-terminated-2021-11-16/>

U.S. secures GSK-Vir COVID-19 antibody therapy doses worth \$1 bln

The United States has signed contracts worth about \$1 billion for doses of the antibody-based COVID-19 treatment from Britain's GSK and U.S.-based Vir Biotechnology, as countries seek to secure promising options beyond vaccines. The drugmakers said on Wednesday the U.S. orders bring the total number of doses to be supplied to more than 750,000 globally, without specifying how many doses of the treatment, sotrovimab, the U.S. government had signed up for.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/united-states-signs-about-1-bln-order-gsk-vir-covid-19-antibody-drug-2021-11-17/>

COVID-19: More infectious variant of Delta virus accounts for 1 in 10 COVID cases in England

Professor Paul Elliott, director of the REACT programme at Imperial College London, said the strain "seems to be less symptomatic" than the original Delta virus - adding this is a "good thing" as it "may be spreading less far in distance" when people are coughing.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-more-infectious-variant-of-delta-virus-accounts-for-1-in-10-covid-cases-in-england-12471056>

Could this gene double your risk of dying from COVID-19?

Soon after the pandemic began, we knew that certain groups of people are more at risk of dying from COVID-19 than others. It was immediately clear that those with specific underlying health conditions such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease were at increased risk, but slowly it became evident that certain ethnic groups were also being disproportionately affected. Social factors have played an important role in why these groups have been more affected than others, but genetics may also play a part. Scientists at Oxford University have now identified a version of a gene that may be associated with doubling the risk of respiratory failure from COVID, and it could go some way to explaining why people from particular backgrounds are more likely to die from the virus. The study's authors said that their work identifying the gene was extremely difficult because it wasn't merely the presence of the gene they were looking for, but whether it was switched "on", making it more high risk.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2021/11/17/could-this-gene-double-your-risk-of-dying-from-covid-19>

GlaxoSmithKline and Vir finally score \$1B supply deal for COVID antibody—6 months after FDA nod

It was a long time coming but GlaxoSmithKline and Vir Biotechnology have finally secured a supply deal with the United States for their COVID-19 antibody treatment—six months after it scored an FDA emergency authorization. The U.S. will pay \$1 billion to expand access to sotrovimab throughout the country. While the green light for sotrovimab—known commercially as Xevudy—came in May, the therapy has been available in more than half of the states in the U.S., which were free to make separate deals to acquire it. GSK said it will supply the contracted doses by Dec. 17. There is an option for the U.S. to purchase additional doses by March 2022. GSK did not reveal how many doses are included in the agreement but said it has now secured contracts to sell more than 750,000 doses worldwide. Japan, Australia and Canada are among the countries that have inked supply deals for sotrovimab.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/six-months-after-fda-nod-gsk-vir-finally-score-1-billion-supply-deal-for-its-covid-19>

Johnson and Johnson's new vaccines leader talks Covid-19, pipeline plans, and 'a golden

opportunity' for clinical trials

There's a changing of the guard at Janssen, Johnson & Johnson's vaccines division. In June, the company announced that Penny Heaton, formerly the founding CEO of the Bill and Melinda Gates Medical Research Institute, was joining Janssen as the global therapeutic area head for vaccines, taking over from Johan Van Hoof, who retires at the end of 2021. Heaton's CV shows her chops. She also previously worked for Merck, Novartis, and Novavax, and earlier in her career at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As she faces her first J&J Pharma Day on Wednesday — actually a two-day event for analysts — STAT caught up to Heaton to ask her about her plans for Janssen's vaccines division. We discussed the company's Covid-19 vaccine, made with an adenovirus 26 delivery system that is also used in its Ebola vaccine, which has been licensed in Europe. We also talked about Janssen's promising vaccine to protect adults against respiratory syncytial virus or RSV, now in a Phase 3 clinical trial, and other things in its pipeline.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/11/17/johnson-janssen-vaccines-penny-heaton-covid19/>

With 128 Covid vaccines in clinical development, we don't know if the approved/authorized ones are the best ones

Pfizer/BioNTech. Moderna. Johnson & Johnson. AstraZeneca. These are the marquee names that spring to mind when you think of the vaccine companies at the forefront of the global fight against Covid-19. And for good reason: together they have manufactured the majority of the estimated 7 billion-plus Covid vaccine doses administered to date around the world. But as regulators in the U.S., Europe, and around the world mull the most responsible way to expand vaccine eligibility to an even larger share of their populations — including to younger children, as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have done this month by greenlighting Pfizer's vaccine for kids 5 to 11 years of age — it's time to confront an uncomfortable reality: The global health community still doesn't know which of the hundreds of Covid vaccines currently in clinical and preclinical development are truly "the best." That's a shortcoming governments and the global health system need to address if they are to ensure that the next pandemic doesn't knock the world on its heels to the extent the novel coronavirus has done.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/11/17/are-authorized-approved-covid-vaccines-best-ones-we-dont-know/>

Pfizer agrees to allow generic versions of its COVID pill

Pharmaceutical giant Pfizer has signed a deal enabling the production and supply of its experimental COVID anti-viral drug in dozens of lower- and middle-income countries. The agreement between the US company and the UN-backed international public health group Medical Patent Pool (MPP) would allow producers to manufacture and supply generic versions of the drug in 95 countries without the threat of patent infringement.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/16/pfizer-strikes-deal-to-broaden-access-to-its-covid-pill>

Coronavirus Resurgence

COVID-19 deaths decline 17% in the Americas, says health agency

COVID-19 deaths have decreased 17% in the Americas over the past week, but the most populous countries like the United States, Brazil and Colombia are seeing a leveling of new infections after weeks of declining trends, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) said on Wednesday. Mexico is reporting an increase in new deaths and in the Caribbean Trinidad and Tobago had a sharp rise in deaths as intensive care unit (ICU) beds fill with COVID-19 patients, PAHO said.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/covid-19-deaths-decline-17-americas-says-health-agency-2021-11-17/>

South Africa's Expected Fourth Covid-19 Wave Seen Less Severe

South Africa, which has the most confirmed coronavirus cases on the continent, will likely be hit by a fourth wave of infections but its impact probably won't be as severe as during earlier surges, new

modeling prepared for the government shows. Sero-prevalence surveys and other data indicate that an estimated 60% to 70% of the population has already contracted Covid-19, which together with vaccinations will provide protection from severe disease, the South African Covid-19 Modelling Consortium said in a online presentation on Wednesday. Even its worst-case scenario projected that deaths and hospitalizations during a fourth wave would be substantially lower than during prior surges. While South Africa's current caseload is "incredibly low" it's "very hard to commit to say South Africa is over the worst" of the coronavirus, said Harry Moultrie, a senior epidemiologist at the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, which coordinated the modeling.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-11-17/south-africa-s-expected-fourth-covid-19-wave-seen-less-severe>

Brazil registers 132 COVID-19 deaths on Tuesday

Brazil registered 132 COVID-19 deaths on Tuesday and 4,918 additional cases, according to data released by the nation's Health Ministry. The South American country has now registered a total of 611,478 coronavirus deaths and 21,965,684 total confirmed cases.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/brazil-registers-132-covid-19-deaths-tuesday-2021-11-16/>

Poland reports 24239 new COVID-19 cases, highest since April

Poland reported 24,239 new daily COVID-19 infections, health ministry data showed on Wednesday, the highest total since April. There were also 463 COVID-related deaths reported on Wednesday. Poland, a country of around 38 million people, has reported 3,254,875 cases of the coronavirus and 79,624 deaths since the beginning of the pandemic.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/poland-reports-24239-new-covid-19-cases-highest-since-april-2021-11-17/>

Hungarian doctors warn of 'sad Christmas' as COVID cases soar

Hungary reported 10,265 new COVID-19 infections on Wednesday, its highest daily tally since the end of March, prompting the country's Medical Chamber to call for a ban on mass events and mandatory mask wearing in closed spaces. In a statement, the Hungarian Medical Chamber also said entry to restaurants, theatres and cinemas should be conditional on a COVID-19 immunity certificate. "We must slow down the increase in the number of patients, a flooding of hospitals (with COVID-19 patients) or many families will have a very sad Christmas," they said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/hungary-reports-10265-new-daily-covid-19-infections-highest-since-end-march-2021-11-17/>

Slovakia reports highest daily tally for new coronavirus cases

Slovakia reported 8,342 new coronavirus cases for Tuesday, the highest daily tally to date in the central European country of 5.5 million people, Health Ministry data showed on Wednesday.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/slovakia-reports-highest-daily-tally-new-coronavirus-cases-2021-11-17/>

Dutch running short of COVID-19 tests as surge breaks records

Dutch health authorities said on Wednesday they were running short of COVID-19 tests, as the Netherlands registered more than 20,000 new coronavirus cases for the second day in a row, the highest since the pandemic began. "We are coming up against the maximum of our capacity," said Jaap Eikelboom, head of COVID-19 operations at the National Public Health Service, in a statement. The service said it was working to expand test capacity amid a new surge that has caught health authorities and Prime Minister Mark Rutte's government off guard. Around 85% of the adult Dutch population is fully vaccinated.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/dutch-running-short-covid-19-tests-surge-breaks-records-2021-11-17/>

Austrian COVID cases hit record on third day of lockdown for unvaccinated

Austrian coronavirus infections hit a new daily record on Wednesday, the third day of a lockdown for those not fully vaccinated aimed at halting the surge. Roughly 65% of Austria's population is fully vaccinated against the virus, one of the lowest rates in western Europe. Austria also has one of the highest infection rates on the continent, with a seven-day incidence of 925 per 100,000 people. Soaring infections across Europe as winter approaches are prompting governments to consider reintroducing unpopular lockdowns.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/austrian-covid-cases-hit-record-third-day-lockdown-unvaccinated-2021-11-17/>

Czech Republic, Slovakia see record cases, mull restrictions

The Czech Republic and Slovakia both reported record daily new coronavirus cases on Wednesday, a day before the two European Union countries plan to approve new restrictions for unvaccinated people in response to rising infections. Thousands in the capitals of both countries, Prague and Bratislava, used Wednesday's anniversary of the 1989 anti-communist Velvet Revolution to rally against their government's upcoming coronavirus restrictions. The protesters ignored social distancing and didn't wear masks. Police didn't intervene in Prague. In Bratislava, police said two officers sustained injuries after the crowd near the seat of the government detonated fire crackers.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-prague-czech-republic-slovakia-f146abab74cd6e83ab30affe7eb34b54>

Europe only region with increasing COVID deaths last week: WHO

The World Health Organization (WHO) has said that Europe was the only region in the world where COVID-related deaths increased last week after a rise of 5 percent. In its weekly report on the pandemic issued on Tuesday, the WHO also said cases jumped 6 percent globally, driven by a rise in the Americas, Europe and Asia. WHO said COVID-19 deaths in all regions other than Europe remained stable or declined last week, totalling 50,000 worldwide. Of the 3.3 million new infections reported, 2.1 million came from Europe, it said. It was the seventh consecutive week that COVID-19 cases continued to mount across the 61 countries that WHO counts in its European region, which stretches through Russia to Central Asia.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/17/who-europe-only-region-with-increasing-covid-deaths-last-week>