

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

12th Jan 2022

What we want to achieve

- **A reliable news source** -- We search for stories that come from reliable sources. We're trying to create a disinformation bulwark, a wall built from a range of stories and perspectives that can help users see what is being written about Covid-19 around the world each day.
- **A trustworthy source** -- By hand-picking stories a range of stories from reliable sources we aim to support COVID health literacy and decision making and not dictate what organizations or individuals should think or do in any fashion.
- **A logical presentation** -- Our search tool scoops up news via APIs, expert analysts read the text and editors organise the stories in accessible and logical categories each day.
- **A useful compendium of stories** -- We aim to maintain independence, integrity and accuracy - in the hope of creating a database of stories and information journalists and decision makers on all levels can use to help themselves better understand action options, advocate for smarter policies and communicate useful information.
- **A crowd-resourced platform** -- after two years and more than 560 newsletters we are looking for contributors, donors and/or amplifiers to 'freshen-up' this platform and expand its reach and impact.

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Lockdown Exit

Vaccination in Africa: Countries Struggle to Give Shots Despite Improved Doses

As shipments of Covid shots ramp up for billions of people left behind last year, and new vaccines make their way to the public, dozens of countries are struggling to turn supplies into inoculations. A dearth of immunization sites in Cameroon, weak communication and Covid denial in the Democratic Republic of Congo and a syringe shortfall in Kenya are among the hurdles complicating rollouts. In Zimbabwe, which initially raced ahead of many peers, complacency and a perception of omicron as less serious have slowed the campaign. Starved for vaccines for most of last year, Covax, the World Health Organization-backed program that aims to tackle vaccine inequity, is now approaching 1 billion doses in shipments. As the focus shifts to increasing immunization in poorer countries, officials worry the rapid spread of the omicron variant could spur the emergence of more shot-evading variants.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/newsletters/2022-01-11/africa-struggles-to-get-shots-into-arms>

Pfizer plans to produce up to 100 million doses of new Omicron-specific Covid vaccine by spring

Pfizer, producer of the most popular vaccine in the U.S., says it could produce up to 100 million doses of an Omicron specific vaccine by early April. The Omicron Covid variant, first discovered in November, has the ability to evade protections provided by the vaccine. This has sent pharma companies and vaccine manufacturers into a race to develop new vaccines and treatments for the variant. Bourla has said that the virus will likely be around for the next decade but his company's shots will allow Covid to be able to be controlled

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-10392161/Pfizer-plans-produce-100-million-doses-new-Omicron-specific-Co>

vid-vaccine-spring.html

A million set to throng India's Ganges for holy dip despite COVID-19

Nearly one million Hindu worshippers are expected to gather on the banks of the Ganges river this Friday and Saturday for a holy bathe despite galloping COVID-19 infections across the country, an official told Reuters on Tuesday. India reported 168,063 new COVID-19 infections on Tuesday, a 20-fold rise in a month. Most infected people have recovered at home and the level of hospitalisations has been less than half of that seen during the last major wave of infections in April and May.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/india-reports-168063-new-covid-19-infections-2022-01-11/>

Spain Calls for Debate to Consider Covid as Endemic, Like Flu

Spain is calling on Europe to debate the possibility that Covid-19 can now be treated as an endemic illness, setting a model to monitor its evolution akin to the one used for flu.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-11/spain-calls-for-debate-to-consider-covid-as-endemic-like-flu>

Bill Gates Expects Fewer Covid Cases, Yearly Shots After Omicron

A decline in the number of coronavirus cases is likely after the current wave of the omicron variant crests and the disease could be "treated more like seasonal flu," billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates says in a Twitter discussion with Professor Devi Sridhar of Edinburgh University Medical School. "A more transmissible variant is not likely but we have been surprised a lot during this pandemic. Omicron will create a lot of immunity at least for the next year," he writes. Gates, who has committed resources via his foundation to help in the global fight against the virus, says people may have to take "yearly shots for Covid for some time"

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-11/bill-gates-expects-fewer-covid-cases-yearly-shots-after-omicron>

J&J Vaccine Gets Additional Warning on Bleeding Side Effect

The fact sheet for Johnson & Johnson's Covid-19 vaccine has been revised by U.S. regulators to warn of the risk of a rare bleeding disorder. The Food and Drug Administration said in a letter to the company on Tuesday that adverse-event reports suggested an increased risk of immune thrombocytopenia during the 42 days following vaccination. Symptoms include bruising or excessive or unusual bleeding, according to the agency. The changes to the fact sheet include recommendations to vaccination providers about giving the J&J shot to people with existing medical conditions, including those who have a low level of platelets, a type of blood cell that helps stop bleeding.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-11/j-j-vaccine-gets-additional-warning-on-bleeding-side-effect>

China: Twenty million under strict COVID lockdown amid fears Omicron could disrupt Beijing Winter Olympics

About 20 million people in China are now under a stay-at-home order after a third city brought in a strict COVID lockdown. Anyang in Henan province, with a population of 5.5 million, confirmed a lockdown after 84 cases were detected since Saturday - at least two of them Omicron. Mass testing is being carried out - established practice in China after even a handful of cases - and non-essential vehicles are banned from the streets.

<https://news.sky.com/story/china-twenty-million-under-strict-covid-lockdown-amid-fears-omicron-could-disrupt-beijing-winter-olympics-12513601>

No vax, pay tax, says Canada's Quebec as health system struggles

Quebec, Canada's second most populous province, is planning to force adults refusing to get COVID-19 vaccinated pay a "health contribution" in a move likely to spur a debate about individual rights and social responsibility. Premier Francois Legault told reporters at a briefing on Tuesday that the proposal, details of which were still being finalised, would not apply to those who cannot get

vaccinated for medical reasons.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/canadas-quebec-working-plan-get-unvaccinated-residents-pay-up-says-premier-2022-01-11/>

Pfizer to cut U.S. sales staff as meetings with healthcare providers move to virtual

Pfizer Inc said on Tuesday it is reducing its U.S. sales staff as it expects doctors and other healthcare providers to want fewer face-to-face interactions with sales people after the COVID-19 pandemic ends. The move comes as the company is expected to announce more than \$80 billion in revenue in 2021 on strong sales of the COVID-19 vaccine it developed with Germany's BioNTech SE. That would be record sales for a pharmaceutical company, according to Pfizer Chief Executive Albert Bourla. "We are evolving into a more focused and innovative biopharma company, and evolving the way we engage with healthcare professionals in an increasingly digital world," the company said in a statement.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/exclusive-pfizer-cut-us-sales-staff-meetings-move-virtual-2022-01-11/>

Abbott Labs CEO expects strong COVID-19 testing demand in near term

Abbott Laboratories Chief Executive Officer Robert Ford said on Tuesday demand for COVID-19 testing has surged globally and that sales of its tests should stay strong in the near term. "We've obviously you know, had a pretty, pretty strong last couple of months of testing and we expect that to continue here in the more immediate future," Ford said at the annual J.P. Morgan Health care conference. He added his company has the capacity to support demand. While testing demand will eventually dwindle, there will be a portion that is sustained, Ford said.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/abbott-labs-ceo-expects-strong-covid-19-testing-demand-near-term-2022-01-11/>

Exit Strategies

COVID-19: Heathrow demands all testing is dropped after 600,000 passengers cancelled Christmas flights

Heathrow Airport has called for all coronavirus testing to be dropped for fully-vaccinated people while revealing that "at least" 600,000 passengers cancelled flights during the key holiday month of December. The UK's largest airport said "swiftly imposed" action during the month to tackle the Omicron variant in the run-up to the festive season prompted uncertainty among travellers who faced additional bills for costly PCR tests.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-heathrow-demands-all-testing-is-dropped-after-600-000-passengers-cancelled-christmas-flights-12513418>

U.S. CDC may recommend better masks against Omicron

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is considering updating its mask guidance because of an increase in the number of Omicron-related coronavirus cases, the Washington Post reported on Monday. The agency will likely advise people opt for the highly protective N95 or KN95 masks worn by healthcare personnel, if they can do so consistently, the newspaper reported, citing an official close to the deliberations. The CDC guidance is expected to say that if people can "tolerate wearing a KN95 or N95 mask all day, you should," the report said.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/cdc-weighs-recommending-better-masks-against-omicron-washington-post-2022-01-11/>

U.S. insurers must cover eight at-home COVID tests per person monthly -White House

Insurance companies will be required to cover eight over-the-counter at-home coronavirus tests per person each month starting Saturday, the Biden administration said, expanding access to highly sought-after kits as Americans grapple with a surge in coronavirus cases. The White House also said

on Monday that there is no limit to the number of COVID-19 tests, including at-home tests, that insurers must cover if they are ordered or administered by a health care provider.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/insurers-will-cover-8-at-home-covid-tests-per-person-each-month-white-house-2022-01-10/>

Japan to maintain strict border restrictions until end of February

Japan will maintain its tight entry restrictions to prevent the spread of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus until the end of February, the prime minister said on Tuesday, though some exceptions for humanitarian reasons may be considered. Japan adopted some of the strictest border controls in the world when the Omicron variant emerged late last year, banning all new entry by non-Japanese people, including students and foreign family members of Japanese or permanent residents, except in exceptional circumstances.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japan-maintain-most-border-restrictions-until-end-february-2022-01-11/>

China orders suspension of some U.S. flights after COVID-19 cases

China has ordered the cancellation of more than two dozen scheduled flights from the United States in recent weeks after numerous passengers tested positive for COVID-19 after arriving in China. China's aviation regulator has mandated the cancellations of eight total scheduled U.S. passenger airline flights for Shanghai under its COVID-19 pandemic rules: four by United Airlines and two each from Delta Air Lines and American Airlines. Delta said it canceled Detroit to Shanghai flights last Friday and Jan. 14 due to the Chinese rule requiring "all affected carriers", whose passengers test positive for COVID-19, "to cancel inbound service on certain China flights."

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-orders-suspension-some-us-flights-after-covid-19-cases-2022-01-11/>

U.S. secures 600000 more doses of GSK-Vir's COVID-19 therapy

The United States has agreed to buy 600,000 more doses of GSK and Vir Biotechnology's COVID-19 antibody therapy for an undisclosed sum, as the country bolsters its arsenal of treatments against the Omicron coronavirus variant. The additional doses of sotrovimab would be delivered in the first quarter of 2022, the drugmakers said on Tuesday, taking the tally of doses secured by nations worldwide to roughly 1.7 million. Canada and the European Union have signed deals too.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-buys-600000-more-doses-gsk-virs-antibody-covid-19-treatment-2022-01-11/>

Health officials let COVID-infected staff stay on the job

Health authorities around the U.S. are increasingly taking the extraordinary step of allowing nurses and other workers infected with the coronavirus to stay on the job if they have mild symptoms or none at all. The move is a reaction to the severe hospital staffing shortages and crushing caseloads that the omicron variant is causing. California health authorities announced over the weekend that hospital staff members who test positive but are symptom-free can continue working. Some hospitals in Rhode Island and Arizona have likewise told employees they can stay on the job if they have no symptoms or just mild ones. The highly contagious omicron variant has sent new cases of COVID-19 exploding to over 700,000 a day in the U.S. on average, obliterating the record set a year ago. The number of Americans in the hospital with the virus is running at about 110,000, just short of the peak of 124,000 last January.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-business-health-arizona-california-0113146dc7b8fd8a5b6a5624d8e0e30c>

Indonesia to kick off booster campaign, but most will have to pay

Indonesia officially kicks off its vaccine booster programme on Wednesday, with free jabs for the elderly and those without the means to pay, according to the Ministry of Health. But the decision to make the majority of Indonesia's 270 million inhabitants pay for the boosters out of their own pockets has fuelled controversy. "Why has the government suddenly come up with the idea of boosters? If it is because the government is worried about waning antibodies, then it is OK as that is

relative to the pandemic,” Pandu Riono, an epidemiologist and professor at the University of Indonesia, told Al Jazeera. “But if it is related to the pandemic, then the vaccines should be free.”

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/11/indonesia-to-kick-off-booster-campaign-but-most-will-have-to-pay>

Partisan Exits

Vaccine hesitancy changes over time: Attitudes toward vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic

Worldwide, vaccine hesitancy is proving to be a stumbling block to securing much needed protection against the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Now, researchers from Japan have uncovered specific factors that influence attitudes about vaccines, which is valuable knowledge for combating vaccine hesitancy. In a study published last month in *Vaccines*, researchers from the University of Tsukuba reported dramatic changes in vaccine acceptance over a five-month period during the COVID-19 pandemic. Detailed information about what causes these changes could help address low vaccine uptake in specific populations.

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-01-vaccine-hesitancy-attitudes-vaccines-covid-.html>

Anti-vax leader urges people to drink their urine instead of get vaccine in latest wild conspiracy

Some Anti-vaxxers will do anything to avoid taking the coronavirus vaccine, including, reportedly, drinking their own urine. The Daily Beast reports that a prominent figure in the anti-Covid-19 community, Christopher Key – who calls himself the "Vaccine Police" – is now telling his followers to drink their own urine in order to cure themselves of Covid-19.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/christopher-key-drink-urine-conspiracy-b1990315.html>

In vaccine-shy Poland, COVID deaths top 100000

The number of deaths per one million inhabitants was last week among the highest in the world, according to the Our World in Data project at the University of Oxford, at more than 57 compared to around 35 in the United States and 37 in Russia. "Today we can say it is another sad day, but especially so because we have passed the level of 100,000 COVID deaths," Health Minister Adam Niedzielski told private broadcaster TVN 24.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/polands-total-covid-19-death-toll-passes-100000-2022-01-11/>

UK's Johnson faces lockdown-breach claims over garden party

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson faced a wave of public and political outrage on Tuesday over allegations that he and his staff flouted coronavirus lockdown rules by holding a garden party in 2020 while Britons were barred by law from meeting up with more than one person outside their households. Opposition politicians called for a police investigation after broadcaster ITV published a leaked email invitation to “socially distanced drinks” in the garden of the prime minister’s Downing Street office and residence. The email from the prime minister’s private secretary, Martin Reynolds, was sent to dozens of people and urged attendees to “bring your own booze.”

<https://apnews.com/article/europe-london-boris-johnson-3a521263aea5e679029647bd81192ab8>

Biden wants U.S. agencies to mandate COVID-19 testing for unvaccinated employees by Feb 15

The Biden administration said on Tuesday that federal agencies should require weekly COVID-19 testing by Feb. 15 for unvaccinated government employees who are working on-site or interacting with the public. A vaccine mandate imposed by President Joe Biden in September covers about 3.5 million federal workers and required them to be fully vaccinated by Nov. 22 or face potential discipline or even termination.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/biden-wants-us-agencies-mandate-covid-19-testing-unvaccinated-employees-by-fe>

[b-2022-01-11/](#)

Mexican president's family, some government officials isolating after his COVID-19 diagnosis

Some members of Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's family and cabinet were isolating and taking COVID-19 tests on Tuesday after he announced he was diagnosed with COVID-19 for the second time a day earlier. Lopez Obrador, who announced he had tested positive on Monday evening, may have met with at least four members of his cabinet, including Interior Minister Adan Augusto Lopez, earlier that day, according to a report by Mexican newspaper El Universal. A spokesman for the president did not confirm how many people he may have had contact with before testing positive, but said there were "members of the cabinet and his family." "So far none have symptoms and those who have been tested have been negative," the spokesman told Reuters.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/mexican-president-says-doing-well-after-second-covid-19-diagnosis-2022-01-11/>

Scientific Viewpoint

5 reasons you should not deliberately catch Omicron to 'get it over with'

The idea of intentionally trying to catch Omicron is "all the rage," said Dr. Paul Offit, the director of the Vaccine Education Center at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, with an exasperated sigh. "It's caught on like wildfire," agreed Dr. Robert Murphy, executive director of the Havey Institute for Global Health at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. "And it's widespread, coming from all types of people, the vaccinated and boosted and the anti-vaxxers," he added, with a warning. "You'd be crazy to try to get infected with this. It's like playing with dynamite." In case the thought had crossed your mind, here are five reasons why you should not purposely try to catch Omicron.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/11/health/deliberate-omicron-infection-wellness/index.html>

WHO says more research needed on vaccine efficacy against Omicron

A World Health Organization technical body said on Tuesday that current COVID-19 vaccines may need to be reworked to ensure they are effective against Omicron and future variants of the coronavirus. The technical group, made up of independent experts, said it would consider a change in vaccination composition and stressed that shots needed to be more effective in protecting against infection. "The composition of current COVID-19 vaccines may need to be updated to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines continue to provide WHO-recommended levels of protection against infection and disease by VOCs (variants of concern), including Omicron and future variants," the technical body, tasked with making recommendations to the WHO, said in a statement.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/who-says-more-research-needed-vaccine-efficacy-against-omicron-2022-01-11/>

Novavax CEO says its Covid vaccine could be cleared in multiple countries over next 90 days

The Novavax Covid-19 vaccine could be cleared by 10 regulators for use in multiple countries, including the U.S., in the coming months, the vaccine maker's CEO said Monday. The company expects feedback from American regulators in February, Stanley Erck told CNBC's "Squawk on the Street." The vaccine is currently available for use in 170 countries.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/10/novavax-ceo-covid-vaccine-could-be-cleared-in-multiple-countries-soon.html>

Moderna vaccines the best — and Sinovac least effective — at stopping covid deaths, Singapore data suggests

In a real-world indicator of how coronavirus vaccines are performing, Singapore has released new

figures suggesting shots produced by Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech are much more effective at preventing deaths than the Chinese-developed Sinopharm and Sinovac doses. Eight hundred and two people died of covid-19 in the city state in 2021, of which 555 were not fully vaccinated, while 247 received one of several locally available vaccines, Health Minister Ong Ye Kung told lawmakers on Monday. In terms of deaths per 100,000 people, there were 11 for those immunized with Sinovac and 7.8 for the Sinopharm vaccine, the state-affiliated Straits Times newspaper reported. The rate dropped for people who received messenger RNA — or mRNA — vaccines, with 6.2 deaths for Pfizer-BioNTech and one fatality for Moderna.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/01/11/singapore-coronavirus-vaccine-moderna-sinovac-pfizer/>

Are Throat Swabs Better at Detecting Omicron in Covid-19 Rapid Tests?

A growing debate surrounds whether people testing for Omicron should swab their throats. Most people in the U.S. have been doing Covid-19 rapid tests with nasal swabs. That is what the Food and Drug Administration endorses and what rapid tests sold in the U.S. instruct. But some scientists say a throat swab may be more effective at detecting Omicron. Some are calling on the FDA and test manufacturers to better study throat swabs, saying that the reliance on nasal swabs may be one reason why rapid tests seem to be less sensitive in detecting Omicron than previous variants.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/are-throat-swabs-better-at-detecting-omicron-in-covid-19-rapid-tests-11641897006>

Wellcome Trust to spend £16bn on research with focus on Covid vaccines

The Wellcome Trust, Britain's biggest charity, is ramping up spending on science research to £16bn over the next 10 years, with a focus on funding next-generation Covid vaccines, after it reaped the highest investment returns in a quarter of a century. Wellcome said it was making its biggest funding commitment to science and health in its 85-year history. It was created by the will of the pharmaceuticals entrepreneur Sir Henry Wellcome in 1936. The £16bn promise comes after it spent more than £9bn on research grants and other charitable activities over the past decade, including £1.2bn last year alone. The trust made a 34.5% return in the year to 30 September on its investment portfolio, which is now worth £38.2bn, about £10bn more than a year ago. This is its best performance since it was created in its present form as an independent charitable foundation in 1995, when Wellcome plc was sold off to the drugmaker Glaxo, which later became GlaxoSmithKline.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/jan/11/wellcome-trust-covid-vaccines>

COVID-19 vaccine and periods: Study finds small, temporary change

Some may be hesitant to get vaccinated due to claims of a possible link between COVID-19 vaccines and abnormal menstrual cycles. So far, clinical trials of COVID-19 vaccines have not collected menstrual cycle data post-vaccine. By May 2021, however, a small number of people had reported menstrual-cycle-related issues. The authors of a new study write that “[t]he International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics classifies a variation in cycle length as normal if less than 8 days.” Also, stress can cause cycle lengths to vary Trusted Source or lead to a person skipping a cycle.

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/covid-19-vaccines-linked-to-temporary-increase-in-menstrual-cycle-length>

Covid-19: We have good treatments for omicron, but questions remain, say doctors

Although the impact of omicron has largely been mitigated by vaccination, prior SARS-CoV-2 infection, and better treatments, general medical wards still face high numbers of patients, with many parts of the UK still bracing themselves for the peak, say clinicians. The most recent report from the Intensive Care National Audit and Research Centre (ICNARC),¹ with data up to 7 January, showed that 629 had been patients admitted to critical care with covid-19 in the previous fortnight. As a proportion of overall hospital admissions, the figures for covid related critical care are at the lowest they have been since reporting began in April 2020. On 10 January 18 655 patients were in hospital with covid-19, with daily admissions reaching 2332.2 Simon Ashworth, a consultant in

intensive care medicine at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, told The BMJ, "Hospitals are very full, emergency departments are really busy, there are lots of admissions, difficulties in getting people into care homes, and we need to isolate covid patients from others."

<https://www.bmj.com/content/376/bmj.o61>

WHO warns against treating Covid-19 like flu

The World Health Organization (WHO) on Tuesday warned against treating COVID-19 as an endemic illness like flu, rather than as a pandemic, saying the spread of the Omicron variant has not yet stabilized. Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said on Monday it may be time to change how it tracks COVID-19's evolution to instead use a method similar to how it follows the flu, because its lethality has fallen. That would imply treating the virus as an "endemic illness", rather than a pandemic.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/who-warns-against-treating-covid-19-like-flu-2022-01-11/>

South African studies suggest Omicron has higher 'asymptomatic carriage'

Preliminary findings from two South African clinical trials suggest the Omicron coronavirus variant has a much higher rate of "asymptomatic carriage" than earlier variants, which could explain why it has spread so rapidly across the globe. The studies - one of which was carried out when Omicron infections were surging in South Africa last month and another which resampled participants around the same time - found a far greater number of people tested positive for the coronavirus but were not showing symptoms compared to previous trials. In the Ubuntu study evaluating the efficacy of Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine in people living with HIV, 31% of 230 participants undergoing screening tested positive, with all 56 samples available for sequencing analysis verified to be Omicron.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/south-african-studies-suggest-omicron-has-higher-asymptomatic-carriage-2022-01-11/>

Pfizer CEO says Omicron-targeted vaccine is most likely outcome

Pfizer Inc Chief Executive Albert Bourla on Monday said a redesigned COVID-19 vaccine that specifically targets the Omicron coronavirus variant is likely needed and his company could have one ready to launch by March. Bourla said Pfizer and partner BioNTech SE are working on both an Omicron-targeted vaccine version as well as a shot that would include both the previous vaccine as well as one targeted at the fast-spreading variant. "I think it is the most likely scenario," Bourla said, speaking at J.P. Morgan's annual healthcare conference, which is being held virtually this year. "We're working on higher doses. We're working different schedules. We're doing a lot of things right now, as we speak."

<https://www.reuters.com/markets/deals/pfizer-joins-beigam-therapeutics-develop-rare-disease-therapies-2022-01-10/>

PharmaMar shares soar after drug study suggests efficacy against Omicron

Shares in PharmaMar jumped almost 20% on Tuesday after the Spanish drugmaker said lab trials suggested its Plitidepsin drug was effective against the main COVID-19 variants, including the highly contagious Omicron. Results from in-vitro tests published in the Life Science Alliance journal showed that Plitidepsin, also known as Aplidin, had a potent antiviral effect in all variants and decreased the viral load detected in animal lung tissue by 99%, the company said. The same paper also included previously published positive effects in Phase I and II clinical trials carried out on patients who were hospitalised with COVID-19.

<https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/spains-pharmamar-says-potential-covid-19-treatment-shows-efficacy-against-2022-01-11/>

Too soon to treat COVID-19 like flu as Omicron spreads - WHO

That would imply treating the virus as an endemic illness, rather than a pandemic, without recording every case and without testing all people presenting symptoms. But that is "a way off", WHO's

senior emergency officer for Europe, Catherine Smallwood, said at the briefing, adding that endemicity requires a stable and predictable transmission. "We still have a huge amount of uncertainty and a virus that is evolving quite quickly, imposing new challenges. We are certainly not at the point where we are able to call it endemic," Smallwood said. "It may become endemic in due course, but pinning that down to 2022 is a little bit difficult at this stage."

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/omicron-infect-more-than-half-europes-population-6-8-weeks-who-2022-01-11/>

Repeat Covid Booster Shots Risk Overloading Immune System, EU Regulators Warn

European Union regulators warned that frequent Covid-19 booster shots could adversely affect the immune system and may not be feasible. Repeat booster doses every four months could eventually weaken the immune system and tire out people, according to the European Medicines Agency. Instead, countries should leave more time between booster programs and tie them to the onset of the cold season in each hemisphere, following the blueprint set out by influenza vaccination strategies, the agency said.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-11/repeat-booster-shots-risk-overloading-immune-system-ema-says>

Pfizer COVID vaccine 91% effective against inflammatory syndrome

Among 12- to 18-year-old hospitalized COVID-19 patients, two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine was 91% effective in preventing the rare but serious coronavirus-related multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C), according to a US study published late last week in Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. In the first real-world evaluation of the Pfizer vaccine's effectiveness against MIS-C, a team led by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) researchers compared the odds of COVID-19 vaccination in 102 adolescent MIS-C patients and 181 controls at 24 sites. Controls included 90 COVID-19-negative patients and 91 MIS-C-negative patients from Jul 1 to Dec 9, 2021, after the emergence of the more virulent Delta (B1617.2) variant but before the even more highly transmissible Omicron (B.1.1.529) strain. Median participant age was 14.5 years, and 58% had one or more underlying medical conditions. About 36% of controls and 5% of COVID-19 patients were fully vaccinated at least 28 days before hospitalization.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/01/pfizer-covid-vaccine-91-effective-against-inflammatory-syndrome>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Poland hits grim milestone of 100,000 deaths from COVID-19

Poland has become the latest European nation to reach the grim milestone of 100,000 deaths related to the coronavirus. Nearly a quarter of those deaths — some 24,000 — occurred in the most recent wave of infection that began in October, a period in which vaccines have been widely available in the European Union nation. Health Minister Adam Niedzielski said Tuesday that 493 deaths of people with COVID-19 had been registered in the past day, pushing the death toll to 100,254 in the central European nation of 38 million people.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/poland-covid-warsaw-european-union-germany-b1990622.html>

Covid-19 hospitalizations reach record high, HHS data shows

The number of US patients hospitalized with Covid-19 has hit a record high, adding strain to health care networks and pushing states toward emergency staffing and other measures as they struggle to cope. More than 145,900 people were in US hospitals with Covid-19 as of Tuesday -- a number that surpasses the previous peak from mid-January 2021 (142,246), and is almost twice what it was two weeks ago, according to data from the Department of Health and Human Services. The hospitalization record comes amid a surge in cases fueled by the highly transmissible Omicron variant.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/11/health/us-coronavirus-tuesday/index.html>

UK's wider Covid-19 death toll passes 175,000

More than 175,000 people in the UK have had Covid-19 recorded on their death certificate since the pandemic began, new figures show. It comes just days after the government's preferred death toll, which counts only people who have died within 28 days of testing positive, reached 150,000. A total of 176,035 deaths involving coronavirus have now been registered in the UK, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This includes all instances where Covid-19 has been mentioned on someone's death certificate, either as a main cause of death or a contributory factor. The ONS figures provide the fullest picture so far of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the population. The 175,000 total was passed on December 20 2021, but has only now been confirmed due to the time it takes for deaths to be registered.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/uk-covid-death-toll-figures-b1990691.html>

Australia swamped by Omicron surge as pressure grows on hospitals

Australia's COVID-19 infections hovered near record levels on Tuesday as a surge of infections caused by the Omicron variant put a strain on hospitals already stretched by staff isolating after being exposed to the virus. After successfully containing the coronavirus for most of the pandemic, Australia has been swamped by the rapid spread of the Omicron variant after authorities eased mitigation measures as high vaccination rates were reached. Australia has reported about 1.1 million cases since the pandemic began, with more than half of those in the last two weeks, including nearly 86,000 cases on Tuesday, with two states due to report later.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/australia-swamped-by-omicron-surge-pressure-grows-hospitals-2022-01-11/>

Hong Kong unveils further steps to curb COVID-19 spread, boost vaccinations

Hong Kong will shut kindergartens and primary schools and start offering COVID-19 vaccines for children from the age of five, the city's leader said on Tuesday, as the financial hub grapples with an increase in coronavirus infections. Certain passengers meanwhile will be banned from transiting through Hong Kong for a month, Bloomberg News reported, citing unnamed people familiar with the matter. It comes as the Chinese-ruled city has seen some local transmissions of the Omicron coronavirus variant after three months of no local coronavirus cases at the end of last year.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/hong-kong-leader-says-city-start-vaccinating-children-over-5-years-old-2022-01-11/>

COVID-19 hospitalisations in France see biggest jump since April 2021

The number of people in hospital with COVID-19 in France rose by 767 to 22,749 on Monday, the biggest increase since April 2021 as a runaway Omicron infection rate boosted hospitalisations. Net new hospital admissions still remained well below peaks set in Nov-Dec 2020, when they stood over 700 for nearly a month and COVID-19 hospitalisations peaked at 33,497 on Nov. 16, 2020. Health Minister Olivier Veran told lawmakers on Monday that the Omicron coronavirus variant leads to less serious complications than previous variants, but since it is highly infectious, it is pushing hospital numbers up quickly.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/france-averages-new-record-nearly-270000-new-covid-cases-per-day-2022-01-10/>

Slovenia reports record 5164 new covid-19 cases, 52% up from a week ago

Slovenia and Serbia reported record numbers of new COVID-19 cases on Tuesday, amid the spread of the highly transmissible coronavirus Omicron variant. Slovenia, which has vaccinated 67.3% of its about 2 million-strong population with at least two doses so far, reported 5,164 new cases, up 52% from a week before, according to the National Institute for Public Health. Serbia reported 13,693 new cases and 22 deaths. The total number of registered cases in Serbia is 1,359,544, while 12,958

people have died since the outbreak nearly two years ago.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/slovenia-reports-record-5164-new-covid-19-cases-52-up-week-ago-2022-01-11/>

U.S. reports 1.35 million COVID-19 cases in a day, shattering global record

The United States reported 1.35 million new coronavirus infections on Monday, according to a Reuters tally, the highest daily total for any country in the world as the spread of the highly contagious Omicron variant showed no signs of slowing. The previous record was 1.03 million cases on Jan. 3. A large number of cases are reported each Monday due to many states not reporting over the weekend. The seven-day average for new cases has tripled in two weeks to over 700,000 new infections a day. The record in new cases came the same day as the nation saw the number of hospitalized COVID-19 patients also hit an all-time high, having doubled in three weeks, according to a Reuters tally.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/us-reports-least-11-mln-covid-cases-day-shattering-global-record-2022-01-11/>

Swiss authorities say coronavirus infections set to peak this month

Swiss health authorities said on Tuesday they expect the number of coronavirus infections to peak later this month. "We expect infections to reach their peak in January," Tanja Stadler, head of the national COVID-19 science task force, told a media briefing as the government reported more than 24,600 new cases in Switzerland and tiny neighbour Liechtenstein. "We could get to the peak within the next two weeks if contacts among people stay on the same level. If people are more cautious, it will take longer," she said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/swiss-coronavirus-infections-expected-peak-january-2022-01-11/>

Nepal bans big public gatherings, closes schools amid COVID spike

Officials in Nepal have banned large public gatherings and closed schools across the Himalayan nation for nearly three weeks after a spike in coronavirus cases. Nepal reported 1,357 new cases on Monday, the biggest single-day jump since September last year, taking its total to 833,946 since the pandemic began. Its death toll from the coronavirus is 11,606.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/11/nepal-bans-big-public-gatherings-closes-schools-covid-spike>

Omicron surge sweeps through US hospital staff

As COVID-19 cases in the United States soar in the wake of the holidays, led by the highly transmissible Omicron (B.1.1.529) variant, nearly a quarter of hospitals are reporting critical staffing shortages due to workers being sick or off work for quarantine. Meanwhile, federal and states are expanding vaccination activities and policies to protect more people.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/01/omicron-surge-sweeps-through-us-hospital-staff>

From ambulance delays to transit disruptions, COVID-19 absences hit Canada's public services

From delayed ambulances to police shortages, Canadian public agencies hit hard by COVID-19 worker absences have cut back on service, rearranged staff or warned the public that emergency responses may be disrupted. Over the weekend, paramedics in Toronto, Canada's largest city, said there were briefly no ambulances available to respond to emergencies. The city said about 12.8% of its "essential and critical services" staff were off due to COVID-19 as of Monday.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/ambulance-delays-transit-disruptions-covid-19-absences-hit-canadas-public-2022-01-10/>

New Lockdown

Chinese cities tighten COVID-19 curbs as Tianjin battles Omicron outbreak

Cities across China are imposing tougher restrictions to try to control new outbreaks of COVID-19,

with Tianjin battling the highly contagious Omicron variant which has been detected to have been transmitted locally in two other provinces. A Tianjin official told a Tuesday press briefing that 49 domestically transmitted cases with confirmed symptoms have been detected during the latest outbreak. The city of 14 million people, around 100km (62 miles) from Beijing, is now implementing tough controls to stop the coronavirus from spreading, especially to neighbouring Beijing.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/chinas-tianjin-says-coronavirus-outbreak-hits-49-cases-amid-omicron-battle-2022-01-11/>

China locks down 3rd city, raising affected to 20 million

A third Chinese city has locked down its residents because of a COVID-19 outbreak, raising the number confined to their homes in China to about 20 million people. The lockdown of Anyang, home to 5.5 million people, was announced late Monday after two cases of the omicron variant were reported. Residents are not allowed to go out and stores have been ordered shut except those selling necessities. Another 13 million people have been locked down in Xi'an for nearly three weeks, and 1.1 million more in Yuzhou for more than a week. It wasn't clear how long the lockdown of Anyang would last, as it was announced as a measure to facilitate mass testing of residents, which is standard procedure in China's strategy of identifying and isolating infected people as quickly as possible.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-china-64ca91f0f2315eabea84bb4a9d0801eb>