

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

12th Jul 2022

Lockdown Exit

Omicron Strains Drive New Covid Wave in Europe as Measures Fall Away

A Covid-19 infection wave driven by two hyper-infectious Omicron subvariants is moving rapidly across Europe, leading to an uptick in cases and hospitalizations in countries that have dropped the majority of preventive measures against the virus ahead of the summer months. European governments have discarded many Covid-19 mitigation strategies like mask mandates, mass testing and so-called Covid passports as their focus shifts to economic recovery and the war in Ukraine. A recent survey by McKinsey shows that fewer than 12% of the public in Germany, France, the U.K., Italy and Spain count the pandemic as a primary concern. Scientists don't expect that the wave of infections will lead to the high death tolls seen before vaccine rollouts. But they are concerned that public and national health systems are ill-prepared for fall and winter waves that some predict could see double the current infection figures.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/omicron-strains-drive-new-covid-wave-in-europe-as-measures-fall-away-11657552364>

Macau Shuts All Casinos as City's Worst Outbreak Widens

Macau will shut almost all business premises including casinos for a week from Monday as a Covid-19 outbreak in the gambling hub showed few signs of abating. Essential services such as water and gas utilities as well as businesses including supermarkets, pharmacies and hotels will remain open, according to a government announcement Saturday. The measures, which follow multiple rounds of mass testing, return the enclave to its toughest pandemic restrictions. Macau announced on Sunday that it recorded 93 new cases the day before, bringing the total number of infections in the latest outbreak starting June 18 to 1,467.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-09/macau-shuts-all-casinos-as-city-s-worst-outbreak-widens-pape>
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New Coronavirus Mutant Raises Concerns in India And Beyond

The quickly changing coronavirus has spawned yet another super contagious omicron mutant that's worrying scientists as it gains ground in India and pops up in numerous other countries, including the United States. Scientists say the variant - called BA.2.75 - may be able to spread rapidly and get around immunity from vaccines and previous infection. It's unclear whether it could cause more serious disease than other omicron variants, including the globally prominent BA.5. "It's still really early on for us to draw too many conclusions," said Matthew Binnicker, director of clinical virology at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. "But it does look like, especially in India, the rates of transmission are showing kind of that exponential increase." Whether it will outcompete BA.5, he said, is yet to be determined.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-11/new-coronavirus-mutant-raises-concerns-in-india-and-beyond>

New data on Moderna's omicron-containing bivalent booster candidate

US mRNA specialist Moderna announced new clinical data on its bivalent Omicron (BA.1) booster candidate, mRNA-1273.214, lifting the firm's shares 1.5% to \$179.07 by mid-morning. One month after administration in previously vaccinated and boosted participants, a 50µg booster dose of mRNA-1273.214 elicited significantly higher neutralizing antibody responses against the Omicron subvariants BA.4 and BA.5

<https://www.thepharmaletter.com/article/new-data-on-moderna-s-omicron-containing-bivalent-booster-candidate>

Moderna announces its Omicron-specific COVID-19 booster is more effective against the now-dominant BA.5 variant than previous versions of the shot: Daily deaths from the virus ...

Moderna announced that its second formulation of a COVID-19 booster targeted at the Omicron variant is more effective against the BA.5 variant. The new strain is now dominant in the U.S. and its ability to evade protection from previous infection has health officials fearing it could cause another outbreak. Some experts have opposed the launching of new Omicron-specific booster - expected this fall - until more data on the shots is available. Covid deaths in America have crept upwards to 430 per day over the past week - jumping 13% in seven days

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-11002495/Moderna-announces-Omicron-specific-COVID-19-booster-effective-against-BA-5.html>

The Human Cost of Shanghai's Covid-19 Lockdown: Helplessness, Isolation, Despair

The Wall Street Journal team spoke to various residents across Shanghai about what the Covid lockdown meant to them. Residents who lived through the city's battle against the virus share deeply personal accounts.

<https://www.wsj.com/story/the-human-cost-of-shanghais-covid-19-lockdown-helplessness-isolation-despair-6cbe5854>

Workforce: the persistent victim of the covid-19 pandemic

In the past week, 11 000 people were admitted to hospitals in England with covid and the picture in the devolved nations is likely to be similar. High rates of hospital admissions, even if the patients aren't very unwell, are disruptive for the running of hospitals. Most in the UK continue to use open bays, and this makes wards inefficient and vulnerable to outbreaks. The UK has fewer hospital beds than almost any other European comparator and we can ill afford any loss of hospital capacity. While covid has undoubtedly worsened performance, crowding in emergency departments was a problem before the pandemic. Hospitals are now full, and our "inadvertent natural experiment" has shown that occupancy rates over 92% are invariably associated with full emergency departments and delayed ambulance handovers.

<https://www.bmj.com/content/378/bmj.o1702>

Practice supervisors' and assessors' experiences in the Covid-19 pandemic

The pandemic placed additional pressures on nursing practice assessors and supervisors. This article explores their experiences of supporting students during this period

<https://www.nursingtimes.net/roles/mentors/practice-supervisors-and-assessors-experiences-in-the-covid-19-pandemic-11-07-2022/>

U.S. orders 3.2 million doses of Novavax COVID vaccine

The U.S. government will get 3.2 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine developed by Novavax Inc once the shot has been authorized by the regulators, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the company said on Monday. The shot will be made available for free in the country after it gets authorization by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for emergency use and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) recommendation.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/us-secures-32-mln-doses-novavax-covid-vaccine-2022-07-11/>

EU backs second COVID booster for over-60s, before variant-adapted vaccines are ready

European Union health agencies on Monday recommended a second COVID-19 booster for everyone over 60, as well as medically vulnerable people, amid a new rise in infections and hospitalisations across Europe. While existing coronavirus vaccines continue to provide good protection against hospitalisation and death, vaccine effectiveness has taken a hit as the virus has evolved. EU health agencies have since April recommended a second booster only for those older than 80 and the most vulnerable

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/eu-recommend-2nd-covid-19-booster-over-60s-top-health-official-says-2022-07-11/>

Exit Strategies

Indonesia Requires Covid Test From Travelers Without Booster Vaccine

Indonesia will reimpose a Covid-19 testing requirement for travelers who haven't received their booster vaccine in order to curb a resurgence in cases. Starting from July 17, domestic travelers who have received their booster shot are not required to take the test prior to departure, the Transport Ministry said in a statement. The rest must prove a negative rapid antigen test result at least 24 hours before departing or a negative PCR test within 3 days before leaving, according to the statement published on the ministry's website. People are still required to wear a mask in crowded areas, especially in cities where infection rates are higher.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-11/indonesia-tightens-travel-health-protocols-as-covid-cases-rise>

Are states ordering enough COVID vaccine doses for children under 5?

Since the COVID-19 vaccine was authorized for children under age 5 last month, states have been able to pre-order doses directly from the federal government. Roughly 300,000 children between ages six months and four years have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine as of Thursday, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That is equivalent to about 1.5% of the roughly 19.5 million children in the United States who recently became eligible.

<https://abcnews.go.com/US/states-ordering-covid-vaccine-doses-children/story?id=85417804>

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<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/eu-recommend-2nd-covid-19-booster-over-60s-top-health-official-says-2022-07-11/>

More than 1bn Covid vaccine jabs wasted in pandemic, data analysis suggests

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<https://www.ft.com/content/b2267d3a-ef24-4f96-9c02-7a057d80b3e6>

EU urges second COVID-19 boosters for people ages 60 to 79

The European Union said Monday it's "critical" that authorities in the 27-nation bloc consider giving second coronavirus booster shots to people between the ages of 60 and 79 years and other vulnerable people, as a new wave of the pandemic sweeps over the continent. "With cases and hospitalizations rising again as we enter the summer period, I urge everybody to get vaccinated and boosted as quickly as possible. There is no time to lose," European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Stella Kyriakides said in a statement. The European Center for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the European Medicines Agency said that the second boosters can be given at least four months after the first booster.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/ap-netherlands-covid-europe-european-medicines-agency-b2120359.html>

Hong Kong to make COVID-19 app more like mainland China to curb infections

Hong Kong will update an app it uses for COVID-19 tracking to bring it more in line with mainland China, by requiring people to register by name and by adopting a traffic light colour code to restrict movement of infected residents and close contacts. Previously, users were not required to register with their personal details, and the app was used to enter venues and display vaccination records.

Announcing the changes at a news conference on Monday, Lo Chung-Mau, the city's new health secretary, said that he hoped the app would be updated soon and that it would help to enforce quarantine orders for people required to isolate at home.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/hong-kong-make-covid-19-app-more-like-mainland-china-curb-infections-2022-07-11/>

South Korea's president suspends informal media briefings, citing COVID

South Korea's president will suspend informal media briefings that he has held nearly every day since taking office in May, his office said on Monday, citing rising numbers of COVID-19 infections as a survey showed a fall in his approval ratings. The end of the free-wheeling briefings, which broke with years of tradition as President Yoon Suk-yeol sought to step up transparency, also comes amid growing questions over scandal and party turmoil.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/skoreas-yoon-suspends-informal-media-briefings-citing-covid-2022-07-11/>

Shanghai plans more COVID testing amid fresh curbs across China

Multiple Chinese cities are adopting fresh COVID-19 curbs, from business halts to lockdowns, to rein in new infections, with the commercial hub of Shanghai bracing for another mass testing effort after finding a highly-transmissible Omicron subvariant. The tough curbs by local governments follow China's "dynamic zero-COVID" policy of promptly stamping out all outbreaks at a time when much of the world co-exists with the virus.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-braces-more-mass-covid-testing-amid-fresh-curbs-across-china-2022-07-11/>

Partisan Exits

Large Chinese Bank Protest Put Down With Violence

Hundreds of bank customers demonstrating over frozen deposits were attacked by men in plainclothes in the central Chinese city of Zhengzhou, marking a violent end to one of China's largest public protests in recent years. Images of the clash, which was widely videotaped, spread quickly enough on Chinese social media to outrun the country's army of internet censors, sparking a wave of online criticism. Video footage verified by The Wall Street Journal with protesters who were present on Sunday showed large numbers of unidentified men, many of them dressed in white T-shirts, barreling into peaceful crowds demonstrating on the steps of the local branch of China's central bank. The clash resulted in several injuries, according to the protesters, who said they were themselves beaten by the men in plainclothes.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/large-chinese-bank-protest-put-down-with-violence-11657543437>

Biden Administration to Again Extend the Covid Public-Health Emergency

The US government will once again extend the Covid-19 public health emergency, continuing measures that have given millions of Americans special access to health insurance and telehealth services. The Department of Health and Human Services has repeatedly renewed the emergency since it was originally declared in January 2020, with the most recent extension set to expire July 15. The next extension is expected to take effect Friday, according to a person familiar with the matter who asked not to be identified because the details aren't public. HHS didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-11/white-house-to-extend-covid-public-health-emergency>

Pandemic inquiry must question vaccine priorities | Scotland

In November 2020 the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommended priority vaccination against Covid-19 for key staff in education, municipal services, food, transport and the police. France had similar priorities while some US states also put teachers at the front of the queue. Scotland should have adopted a system based on the best international information to limit the pandemic's toll. The

country's independent Covid inquiry has indicated that vaccine strategies will be investigated. Scotland's prioritisation appears to have been based on a mixture of scientific evidence, lack of evidence and the possible political ramifications of taking more radical or rapid decisions.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/pandemic-inquiry-must-question-vaccine-priorities-0gffrtblb>

Health experts say COVID-19 complacency has restricted freedoms of the immunocompromised and elderly

Australia's COVID hospitalisation rates have spiked back to February highs. Federal Health Minister Mark Butler has shot down any reintroduction of mask mandates. Health experts say Australia's COVID complacency is leading to higher transmission rates

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-07-11/covid-mask-complacency-mandates-australia/101195184>

'They gave her a bed to die in': family of woman with Down's Syndrome denied intensive care seek answers from Covid-19 inquiry

It was not until more than a year later, when they received her medical records, that the family made a crushing discovery. These suggested that, despite Susan being in good health and responding well to initial treatments, doctors at Barnet hospital had concluded she wouldn't pull through. When Susan was first admitted on 27 March 2020, a doctor had written in her treatment plan: "ITU (Intensive therapy unit) review if not improving", indicating he believed she might benefit from a higher level of care. But as her oxygen levels fell and her condition deteriorated, the 56-year-old was not admitted to the intensive unit. Instead she died in her bed on the ward without access to potentially life-saving treatment others received. In the hospital records, seen by the Observer, the reason Susan was excluded is spelled out: "ITU declined in view of Down's syndrome and cardiac comorbidities." A treatment plan stating she was not to be resuscitated also cites her disability.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/jul/10/they-gave-her-a-bed-to-die-in-family-of-woman-with-downs-syndrome-denied-intensive-care-seek-answers-from-covid-19-inquiry>

China's Shanghai asks public to share 'heart-warming' COVID lockdown stories

The government of Shanghai has called on citizens to share "heart-warming" photographs, videos and stories about a punishing two-month lockdown imposed in April by the authorities to curb China's biggest COVID-19 outbreak. The government of China's most populous city has launched the propaganda campaign to "tell epidemic stories, spread volunteer culture and inherit the traditional values of solidarity, friendship and mutual help," local newspaper Wen Hui Bao said on Saturday.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinas-shanghai-asks-public-share-heart-warming-covid-lockdown-stories-2022-07-10/>

Scientific Viewpoint

Moderna Is Developing Two Different Omicron-Targeting Booster Shots

Moderna Inc. said it is developing two potential Covid-19 booster shots targeting different Omicron subvariants, citing differences in market preferences among the U.S. and other countries. The Cambridge, Mass., company said Monday it has completed requests for regulatory authorization of one of its new booster shots in the European Union, the U.K. and Australia. The company expects to complete regulatory filings elsewhere this week. In these countries, Moderna is seeking authorization for the use of mRNA-1273.214, a vaccine that targets both the ancestral strain of the coronavirus and the BA.1 subvariant of Omicron. The BA.1 subvariant was predominant earlier in the year but has been largely displaced by other Omicron subvariants in many countries.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/moderna-is-developing-two-different-omicron-targeting-booster-shots-11657554383>

Future Covid Variants Can Be Predicted by AI, Startup Claims

As pharmaceutical companies struggle to keep up with the rapidly mutating coronavirus, a startup in Cambridge, Mass., says it can help them by using artificial intelligence to predict future variants.

Apriori Bio models the ways a virus might change and predicts how it will behave. The company says it's harnessing that information to design "variant-proof" vaccines and treatments that can fight current and future strains—and provide an early warning to governments, sort of like a hurricane alert, to guide the public-health response. After honing its technology, called Octavia, for more than two years, the fledgling company is formally launching with \$50 million in funding from Flagship Pioneering Inc., the incubator behind Moderna Inc.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-11/future-covid-variants-can-be-predicted-by-ai-startup-claims>

Italy to start administering second COVID booster to over-60s

Italy will soon start its campaign to administer a second COVID-19 booster to everyone aged over 60, the health minister said on Monday, after receiving a green light from European Union health agencies.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/italy-start-administering-second-covid-booster-over-60s-2022-07-11/>

Moderna to advance two Omicron vaccine candidates against newer variants

Moderna Inc said on Monday it was advancing two Omicron vaccine candidates for the fall, one designed against the BA.1 variant and another against the BA.4 and BA.5. Vaccine makers including Moderna and rival Pfizer Inc are developing updated vaccines to target the fast-spreading Omicron subvariants BA.4 and BA.5, which have gained a foothold in the United States over recent weeks. Moderna said its decision to develop the bivalent vaccines was based on different market preferences for shots against the subvariants.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/moderna-advance-two-vaccine-candidates-against-omicron-variants-2022-07-11/>

US FDA approves Pfizer-BioNTech's Covid-19 vaccine for adolescents

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has granted approval for Pfizer and BioNTech's Supplemental Biologics License Application (sBLA) for their Covid-19 vaccine, Comirnaty, for adolescents aged 12 to 15 years. Earlier, the regulatory agency granted emergency use authorization (EUA) for the use of the vaccine in this age group and so far over nine million adolescents of this age have received the initial vaccine regimen. Comirnaty is the first Covid-19 vaccine to obtain FDA approval for use in adolescents. The FDA granted approval based on findings from a Phase III clinical trial in 2,260 subjects aged 12 to 15 years.

<https://www.pharmaceutical-technology.com/news/fda-adolescents-pfizer-vaccine/>

BioNTech, Pfizer ask EU to authorize 3-dose COVID-19 vaccine for kids over 6 months

BioNTech and Pfizer Friday announced they had submitted data to the European Medicines Agency backing their three-dose COVID-19 vaccine for children aged 6 months to less than 5 years. The announcement follows the U.S. Food and Drug Administration granting emergency use authorization for the same schedule in its youngest kids on June 17. The three-dose regimen includes a much lower dose than what's given to adults. BioNTech and Pfizer say that the data from the trial, which enrolled over 10,000 children, indicates the three doses in young children elicited a strong immune response and has a favorable safety profile. Adverse reactions were generally less frequent in this age group compared to children aged between 5 and 12. As such, the companies want the EU to expand its conditional marketing authorization to include the youngest children.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/biontech-pfizer-ask-eu-to-authorize-3-dose-covid-19-vaccine-for-kids-over-6-months/>

Scared of needles? Inhalable COVID-19 vaccine shows promise in new study

An inhalable COVID-19 vaccine has shown great promise in protecting the lungs against the coronavirus in a new study. Researchers from the US' North Carolina State University created the inhalable vaccine that is shelf-stable at room temperature for up to three months and specifically works to target the lungs and can be self-administered through an inhaler.

<https://english.alarabiya.net/coronavirus/2022/07/10/Scared-of-needles-Inhalable-COVID-19-vaccine-shows-promise-i>

[n-new-study](#)

4th COVID-19 vaccine effectively protects elderly against Omicron -study

The fourth dose of the coronavirus vaccine is effective in protecting the elderly against the Omicron variant and lowers their risk of death by 72% compared to those who received only three doses, according to a new study conducted by Tel Aviv University and Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in collaboration with the Health Ministry. The study, published in the peer-reviewed JAMA Internal Medicine journal, found that elderly recipients of the fourth dose were 34% more protected against infection than those who received only the third dose at four months previously. Recipients of the fourth dose were also 64-67% less likely to be hospitalized for mild to moderate and severe illness.

<https://www.jpost.com/health-and-wellness/coronavirus/article-711699>

Moderna's Noubar Afeyan on the race to create a Covid vaccine

Moderna's Noubar Afeyan on the race to create a Covid vaccine with the Financial Times health team

<https://www.ft.com/content/39aac697-788b-4a2b-8b27-d6c865b736a9>

Could a universal coronavirus vaccine be the silver bullet that ends this pandemic—and the next?

First-generation vaccines were not the panacea hoped for in COVID-19's early days. Nor did herd immunity swoop in and save the day. Could a so-called "pan-coronavirus" vaccine be the long-awaited silver bullet that ends the COVID pandemic—and the next one, too? Answer: It's complicated. "The term pan-coronavirus vaccine needs an asterisk next to it," Dr. Stuart Ray, vice chair of medicine for data integrity and analytics at Johns Hopkins' Department of Medicine, told Fortune.

<https://fortune.com/2022/07/10/could-a-universal-pan-coronavirus-vaccine-be-silver-bullet-that-ends-this-covid-pandemic-and-the-next-common-colds-omicron/>

CEPI provides \$30m to advance novel coronavirus vaccine

The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) has partnered with a consortium of research and technological institutions to fund the development of a novel vaccine to provide protection against COVID-19, as well other SARS-like Betacoronaviruses.

<https://www.europeanpharmaceuticalreview.com/news/173036/novel-coronavirus-vaccine/>

Hologic Announces Two New Respiratory Assays for the Detection of COVID-19, Flu A, Flu B and RSV

Hologic, Inc. announced that it is now offering its Panther Fusion ® SARS-CoV-2/Flu A/B/RSV assay and its Novodiag ® RESP-4 molecular diagnostic test for sale in the European Union in time for the northern hemisphere's respiratory viral season. Both assays detect and differentiate four of the most prevalent respiratory viruses that can present with similar clinical symptoms: severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), influenza A (Flu A), influenza B (Flu B) and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). The Panther Fusion SARS-CoV-2/Flu A/B/RSV assay is a high-performance cartridge-based assay that runs on the fully automated high-throughput Panther Fusion system. The test uses nasopharyngeal swab samples.

<https://apnews.com/press-release/business-wire/covid-health-flu-severe-acute-respiratory-syndrome-syncytial-virus-39a795e01462425a87627160fd14724a>

Study reveals sex-based differences in the clinical outcomes of COVID-19 in the US

In a recent study posted to the Research Square* preprint server, researchers investigated sex-based differences among coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) patients in the United States (US). Studies have reported greater severity and fatality associated with COVID-19 among men compared to women across the globe; however, the mechanisms for sex-based differences in severe acute

respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) infections are not clear. Previous research observations indicate that researchers must consider the patients' sex as an important variable for COVID-19 data interpretation.

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20220711/Study-reveals-sex-based-differences-in-the-clinical-outcomes-of-COVID-19-in-the-US.aspx>

BioNTech, Pfizer ask EU to authorize 3-dose COVID-19 vaccine for kids over 6 months

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<https://www.politico.eu/article/biontech-pfizer-ask-eu-to-authorize-3-dose-covid-19-vaccine-for-kids-over-6-months/>

ECDC and EMA update recommendations on additional booster doses of COVID-19 vaccines

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA) are recommending that second booster doses of COVID-19 vaccines be considered for people between 60 and 79 years old and people with medical conditions putting them at high risk of severe disease.

<https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/news-events/ecdc-and-ema-update-recommendations-additional-booster-doses-covid-19-vaccines>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Casino Stocks Fall as Macau Shuts Businesses Amid Covid-19 Outbreak

The latest restrictions in Macau come as the city struggles to contain an outbreak that had already shuttered venues such as cinemas, salons and swimming pools. The Chinese gambling hub has recorded hundreds of cases in recent weeks, its worst-ever outbreak after keeping to China's zero-Covid strategy for most of the pandemic. Macau's chief executive, Ho Iat-seng, had said last month that shutting down all casinos "would affect many employees," and as such the city's more than 40 casinos had been allowed to continue operations. Macau relies on the gambling sector for much of its economic growth and employment. Macau has a population of about 650,000. Throughout the pandemic, it has maintained strict Covid-containment measures. At one point, quarantine for travelers from what it deemed very high-risk countries was as long as 28 days.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/casino-stocks-fall-as-macau-shutters-businesses-amid-covid-19-outbreak-11657565443>

Coronavirus BA.5 and BA.4 variants to blame for surge in infection rates

Two new subvariants of coronavirus are driving a surge in infection rates and hospitalisations across the globe. Health experts identified the strains - known as BA.5 and BA.4 - in Botswana and South Africa in March, and cases have quickly spread across Europe, the United States and Australia. In the wake of the surge in infection rates, health experts are urging people to ensure that they are up to date with their vaccinations and boosters. Everyone over the age of five can have the first two shots, with those aged 16 and over will be eligible for a booster shot. Those aged 75 and over, those who live in care homes, and people aged 12 and over who have a weakened immune system, will be offered a spring booster.

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/health/coronavirus-ba5-ba4-variants-blame-24453468>

COVID-19: New mutant raises concerns in India, beyond

The quickly changing coronavirus has spawned yet another super contagious omicron mutant that's worrying scientists as it gains ground in India and pops up in numerous other countries, including the United States. Scientists say the variant - called BA.2.75 - may be able to spread rapidly and get around immunity from vaccines and previous infection. It's unclear whether it could cause more serious disease than other omicron variants, including the globally prominent BA.5. "It's still really early on for us to draw too many conclusions," said Matthew Binnicker, director of clinical virology at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. "But it does look like, especially in India, the rates of transmission are showing kind of that exponential increase." Whether it will outcompete BA.5, he said, is yet to be determined.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-science-health-india-united-states-e461b0c0db39707aab884378c24292ae>

Hong Kong mulls movement restrictions as COVID cases rise

Hong Kong authorities are considering implementing a health code system in the city that would restrict the movements of those infected with the coronavirus and overseas arrivals, as infections rise again. The system is similar to that of mainland China, in which a red code completely restricts a person's movement, a yellow code is for partial restriction, while a green code means freedom of movement. The colors would appear on Hong Kong's risk-exposure app LeaveHomeSafe. Hong Kong's health chief said Monday that if such a system is implemented, real-name registration would be required and those who test positive for COVID-19 would be given a red code "to identify those who have been infected" and prevent them from interacting with the community. Authorities are also considering reducing the current seven-day hotel quarantine for incoming travelers, and moving part of it to home isolation and health monitoring.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-china-hong-kong-bbd00cb983305648b2cebd8027b4dd02>

New Lockdown

Macau shuts all its casinos to curb COVID, gaming shares plunge

Macau shut all its casinos for the first time in more than two years on Monday, sending shares in gaming firms tumbling as authorities struggle to contain the worst coronavirus outbreak yet in the world's biggest gambling hub. The city's 30-plus casinos and other businesses will shut for one week and people were ordered to stay at home though short trips for essential services were allowed. Police will monitor flows of people outside and stringent punishments will be imposed for those who disobey, the government said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/macau-shuts-down-casinos-race-curb-covid-spread-2022-07-11/>