

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

27th Sep 2021

One Minute Overview

Logistics, Staff Shortage Hurt Indonesia's Vaccination Progress

A shortage of healthcare workers and logistical flaws are hampering Indonesia's efforts to inoculate its people against Covid-19, leaving the world's largest archipelago trailing its neighbors despite being among the first in Southeast Asia to start the program. [Only 17.9% of Indonesia's 270 million people are fully vaccinated, behind almost every major economy in the region, according to Bloomberg Vaccine Tracker.](#) About 32% have received their first dose, placing the nation among the bottom four on the list.

India tells Quad will allow export of 8 mln Indo-Pacific vaccine doses - Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi told fellow leaders of the Quad partnership on Friday [India will allow the export of 8 million COVID-19 vaccines by end of October in line with a deal reached by the grouping of Australia, India, Japan and the United States in March](#), India's foreign secretary said on Friday.

Mexico to use only Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine on at-risk kids - The COVID-19 vaccine by Pfizer-BioNTech will be the only one used in Mexico for at-risk children aged 12-17, Mexico's deputy health minister said on Friday. [Mexico is expanding its vaccine campaign to children with health issues like cancer, diabetes or cardiovascular disease that make them vulnerable to the virus.](#) 'We can only use the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine because it is the only one that has already been scientifically proven to be safe and effective in girls, boys and adolescents from 12 to 17 years old,' Deputy Health Minister Hugo Lopez-Gatell said at a regular news conference.

Rowdy celebrations erupt in Norway as COVID restrictions end - Police in Norway have reported dozens of disturbances and [violent clashes including mass brawls in the Nordic country's big cities after streets, bars, restaurants and nightclubs were filled with people celebrating the end of COVID-19 restrictions](#)

Brazil approves COVID-19 booster shots for healthcare workers - Brazil has approved booster doses of COVID-19 vaccines for 'health professionals,' with preference given to the Pfizer shot, [Health Minister Marcelo Queiroga said on Friday. The boosters will only be given to people six months after they complete initial round of COVID-19 vaccination.](#) Queiroga said in a Twitter post.

This country claims it hasn't had a single Covid-19 case. Activists say that's a lie

Turkmenistan, a former Soviet republic home to nearly 6 million people, is one of at least five countries that have not reported any coronavirus cases, according to a review of data collected by Johns Hopkins University and the World Health Organization. Three of those are isolated islands in the Pacific and the fourth is North Korea, a tightly-controlled hermit state. Turkmenistan's repressive President Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov, who has ruled since 2006, has dismissed reports of Covid-19 in the country as 'fake' and told the United Nations in an address Tuesday that the response to the pandemic shouldn't be 'politicized.' [But independent organizations and journalists and activists outside Turkmenistan say there's evidence the country is battling a third wave which is overwhelming hospitals and killing dozens of people](#) -- and warn the President is playing down the threat of the deadly virus in a bid to maintain his public image.

Pfizer in talks over full license for COVID-19 vaccine in Singapore - Pfizer Inc is in discussions

with Singapore's Health Sciences Authority regarding obtaining a full license application for its COVID-19 vaccine, the company said in response to a query from Reuters. [Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine has interim authorisation under the pandemic special access route in Singapore.](#) The U.S. Food and Drug Administration granted full approval to the vaccine last month.

Kenneth Mak, Singapore's director of medical services, said in a briefing on Friday Pfizer and Moderna had not submitted applications for full registration to authorities.

Moderna CEO Stéphane Bancel says vaccines can end pandemic in one year - Moderna's chief executive says that the coronavirus pandemic could be over in a year and that a boost in production will mean enough vaccines for "everyone on this Earth" by then. [More booster shots should be available, too, to some extent, and even babies will be able to get vaccines, Stéphane Bancel told a Swiss newspaper in an interview published Thursday.](#) Asked whether that could spell "a return to normal" next year, he replied: "As of today, in a year, I assume." With the vaccine industry as a whole expanding production, "enough doses should be available by the middle of next year so that everyone on this Earth can be vaccinated," the French billionaire said.

C.D.C. Chief Overrules Agency Panel and Endorses Pfizer Boosters for Frontline Workers -

The director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Friday overruled a recommendation by an agency advisory panel that had refused to endorse booster shots of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid vaccine for frontline workers. [It was a highly unusual move for the director, Dr. Rochelle Walensky, but aligned C.D.C. policy with the Food and Drug Administration's endorsements over her own agency's advisers.](#) The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices on Thursday recommended the boosters for a wide range of Americans, including tens of millions of older adults and younger people at high risk for the disease. But they excluded health care workers, teachers and others whose jobs put them at risk. That put their recommendations at odds with the F.D.A.'s authorization of booster shots for all adults with a high occupational risk.

70% vaccinated prisoners got COVID, 93% of unvaccinated: Texas study - About 70% of fully vaccinated people in a Texas prison caught COVID-19 in an outbreak, the CDC said. [The data suggests that while Delta can spread among vaccinated people, vaccines protect against severe COVID-19.](#) Of the unvaccinated prisoners, 93% caught COVID-19, and one died, the CDC said.

Lockdown Exit

Pfizer CEO predicts 'normal life' within a year

Pfizer's CEO Albert Bourla said on Sunday he anticipates a return to normal life post-pandemic within the year. "I agree that, within a year, I think we will be able to come back to normal life," Bourla said on ABC's "This Week." Bourla added that he does not think that this means variants will no longer exist or that vaccines would be unnecessary. Bourla said that the "most likely scenario" was that the world would continue to see new variants and have vaccines that would last "at least a year." "I think the most likely scenario is annual revaccination, but we don't know really. We need to wait and see the data," Bourla said.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/politics/pfizer-ceo-predicts-normal-life-within-a-year/ar-AAOQhbj>

'Is my child going to die?' This is Covid-19 as a pediatric doctor

Dr. Sarah Ash Combs' first step of treatment for children brought into her emergency room with Covid-19 usually begins with a question: "What socks are you wearing today?" As her school-aged young patients look up at indistinguishable faces covered by PPE, Combs pulls up a pant leg of her scrub to show her own socks. Sometimes they're mismatched, sometimes they're covered in animals. And if she's wearing her favorite, they have sushi. The surge in Covid-19 cases brought on

by the highly transmissible Delta variant has meant an increase in hospitalizations among children -- many of whom are not eligible for a vaccine yet. Nearly 26% of all Covid-19 cases nationwide are reported in children, according to recent data published by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/26/us/pediatric-covid-doctors/index.html>

One in five psychologists close books to new patients under pandemic strain

Psychologists are struggling to keep up with the mental health demands of the pandemic, with a survey showing one in five were forced to close their books to new patients and others have wait times of up to three months as ongoing restrictions take their toll. Clinical psychologist Dr Lee Cubis, who works in a two-person practice in inner Melbourne, said demand has been huge.

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/one-in-five-psychologists-close-books-to-new-patients-under-pandemic-strain-20210922-p58tuy.html>

NYC Temporarily Blocked From Imposing School Vaccine Mandate

New York City's school system, the largest in the U.S., has been temporarily blocked from imposing a mandate forcing teachers and other staff from getting vaccinated against Covid-19, according to a ruling from a federal judge. That mandate is scheduled to go into effect on Monday at midnight. Late Friday, a judge from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit referred the case to a three-judge panel "on an expedited basis." The hearing will take place on Wednesday, Reuters reported.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-09-25/nyc-temporarily-blocked-from-imposing-schools-vaccine-mandate>

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<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-09-26/logistics-staff-shortage-hurt-indonesia-s-vaccination-progress>

India tells Quad will allow export of 8 mln Indo-Pacific vaccine doses

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi told fellow leaders of the Quad partnership on Friday India will allow the export of 8 million COVID-19 vaccines by end of October in line with a deal reached by the grouping of Australia, India, Japan and the United States in March, India's foreign secretary said on Friday.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india-tells-quad-will-allow-export-8-mln-indo-pacific-vaccine-doses-2021-09-25/>

Rochelle Walensky's Finest Hour

The Biden Administration's booster vaccine plan has been messy and confusing, but at least it arrived at the right outcome. Credit to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention director Rochelle Walensky late Thursday for overruling the agency's outside advisers and backing a broad booster rollout. Last month White House officials and agency heads said they planned to make boosters available on Sept. 20. They were right to prepare, but boosters hadn't been cleared by the Food and Drug Administration. Two senior career FDA officials told reporters they are leaving the agency because they disagreed with the White House booster plan.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/rochelle-walenskys-finest-hour-cdc-fda-janet-woodcock-biden-administration-covid-boost-er-vaccine-shots-11632511818>

White House says millions of government contractors must be vaccinated by Dec. 8

The White House said on Friday that millions of federal contractors must be vaccinated against COVID-19 by Dec. 8 and that the administration will add clauses to future government contracts

mandating inoculations. President Joe Biden signed an executive order on Sept. 9 requiring federal contractors to mandate vaccinations, but many U.S. companies with federal contracts have awaited formal guidance from the White House before moving forward.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/exclusive-white-house-wants-millions-government-contractors-vaccinated-by-dec-8-2021-09-24/>

2021 Lasker Awards Honor Work in mRNA Vaccines, Neuroscience and More

Katalin Kariko, a senior vice president at BioNTech, and Dr. Drew Weissman, a professor in vaccine research at the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine, shared this year's Lasker-DeBakey Clinical Medical Research Award. In retrospect, their 2005 breakthrough was apparent when Dr. Kariko and Dr. Weissman proudly published a surprising finding they had made about messenger RNA, also known as mRNA, which provides instructions to cells to make proteins. The scientists noticed that when they added mRNA to cells, the cells instantly destroyed it. But they could prevent that destruction by slightly modifying the mRNA. When they added the altered mRNA to cells, it could briefly prompt cells to make any protein they chose.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/24/health/lasker-awards-covid-vaccine.html>

Beijing Olympics Is on Course to Have Stricter Covid-19 Rules Than Tokyo

With just over four months to go until the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, the developing picture of the Games is one of severe Covid-19 restrictions for outsiders, and possible advantages for domestic athletes. The U.S. will require vaccinations for its participants—something it stopped short of for the Tokyo Games, and which some observers say could be a precursor to a requirement imposed by China. Early steps taken last week by China to safeguard its “National Games,” a major multisport domestic event, have also raised the prospect of intense measures for people arriving in the country as athletes, officials and media. Those measures could potentially include pre-event quarantines that could disrupt training at the most critical moment for many Olympians.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/beijing-olympics-covid-19-rules-11632488019>

Covid-19 Australia: Prime Minister makes bold promise to Aussies stranded overseas

Australian PM says stranded Australian expats are able to return once vaccination hits 80%. 80% of Australia's population are expected to be double jabbed by December. There are currently 45,000 Aussies stuck overseas waiting to return back home.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10027027/Covid-19-Australia-Prime-Minister-makes-bold-promise-Aussies-stranded-overseas.html>

Exit Strategies

Rowdy celebrations erupt in Norway as COVID restrictions end

Police in Norway have reported dozens of disturbances and violent clashes including mass brawls in the Nordic country's big cities after streets, bars, restaurants and nightclubs were filled with people celebrating the end of COVID-19 restrictions

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/rowdy-celebrations-norway-end-covid-measures-80241948>

Cuba kicks off COVID-19 vaccine exports with shipment to Vietnam

Cuba said on Saturday it had exported its three-shot Abdala coronavirus vaccine for the first time, sending an initial shipment to Vietnam as part of a contract to supply five million doses to the Southeast Asian country. Scientists in the Communist-run island have developed three home-grown vaccines against COVID-19, all of which are waiting to receive official recognition from the World Health Organization.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/cuba-kicks-off-covid-19-vaccine-exports-with-shipment-vietnam-2021-09-25/>

To Reach Vaccine Holdouts, Scientists Take a Page From Digital Marketing

Public-health researchers seeking new ways to persuade vaccine holdouts to take coronavirus shots are turning to the strategies of the digital marketing industry to figure out how to win over the reluctant. Companies that use online ads to sell products try out various colors, phrases, typefaces and a whole host of other variables to determine what resonates with consumers. So why not, the thinking goes, apply the same sort of A/B testing to figure out how best to promote vaccines?

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-09-25/to-reach-vaccine-holdouts-scientists-take-a-page-from-digital-marketing>

Nevada hospital urges residents to take COVID-19 seriously: 'We are pleading with you'

A hospital in Nevada is urging residents to take the coronavirus seriously as it nears capacity due to an influx of COVID-19 patients. "As a hospital staff, we are pleading with you to practice the precautions we know are effective in stopping COVID-19," Northeastern Nevada Regional Hospital said in a COVID-19 update on Friday. The hospital urged citizens to wear masks, avoid large gatherings, practice social distancing and get vaccinated against COVID-19. "Most importantly, please get vaccinated against COVID-19. Vaccination truly is the best way to protect yourself and others from being hospitalized with this disease," the hospital said.

<https://thehill.com/homenews/state-watch/573939-nevada-hospital-urges-residents-to-take-covid-19-seriously-we-are>

El Salvador to begin giving third dose of COVID-19 vaccine

El Salvador will begin administering a third dose of COVID-19 vaccine to various groups including the elderly, healthworkers and people with underlying health conditions, President Nayib Bukele said on Friday. The Central American nation of roughly 6.4 million people has obtained some 12 million vaccines since February. Third shots would be given to people including those aged over 60, frontline health staff, teachers, the armed forces, police and firefighters, as well as Salvadorans with pre-existing health problems, Bukele said on Twitter.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/el-salvador-begin-giving-third-dose-covid-19-vaccine-2021-09-25/>

Brazil approves COVID-19 booster shots for healthcare workers

Brazil has approved booster doses of COVID-19 vaccines for "health professionals," with preference given to the Pfizer shot, Health Minister Marcelo Queiroga said on Friday. The boosters will only be given to people six months after they complete initial round of COVID-19 vaccination, Queiroga said in a Twitter post.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/brazil-approves-covid-19-booster-shots-healthcare-workers-2021-09-24/>

Doctors scale rockslides, invoke gods to vaccinate Himalayan villages

To visit the Indian village of Malana deep in the Himalayas, a COVID-19 vaccination team scrambled over a landslide that blocked the road the day before, scaled a retaining wall and then began a three-hour trek down and up a river valley. Despite the hostile terrain, the northern state of Himachal Pradesh, where Malana is located, earlier this month became the first in India to administer at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose in all its adults. The steep topography was one challenge overcome by health workers walking for hours or days to reach remote villages and another was religious beliefs, as the tourism-dependent state immunised its roughly 5 million adults.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/doctors-scale-rockslides-invoke-gods-vaccinate-himalayan-villages-2021-09-23/>

Cuba starts to reopen economy as COVID-19 vaccine campaign races ahead

Cuba is allowing a staggered opening from Friday of restaurants, shopping centres and beaches in provinces that have lowered coronavirus cases even as it battles some of the highest nationwide rates of infection per capita worldwide. The easing of lockdown restrictions coincides with preparations by the cash-strapped Caribbean island nation for its tourist high season, which it hopes will bring much-needed dollars to palliate a dire economic crisis. The government has already announced it will allow more flights and accept COVID-19 vaccination certificates for inbound travelers in lieu of a PCR test from November.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/cuba-starts-reopen-economy-covid-19-vaccine-campaign-races-ahead-2021-09-24/>

Mexico to use only Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine on at-risk kids

The COVID-19 vaccine by Pfizer-BioNTech will be the only one used in Mexico for at-risk children aged 12-17, Mexico's deputy health minister said on Friday. Mexico is expanding its vaccine campaign to children with health issues like cancer, diabetes or cardiovascular disease that make them vulnerable to the virus. "We can only use the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine because it is the only one that has already been scientifically proven to be safe and effective in girls, boys and adolescents from 12 to 17 years old," Deputy Health Minister Hugo Lopez-Gatell said at a regular news conference.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/mexico-use-pfizer-covid-19-vaccine-at-risk-kids-2021-09-24/>

D.C. area officials begin giving booster shots as the climbing number of cases reach peak levels in unvaccinated Shenandoah Valley

High-risk or elderly residents of the D.C. area who received a Pfizer coronavirus vaccination at least six months ago can receive a booster shot as of Friday, Maryland and D.C. health officials said, although leaders in Virginia have yet to offer their own guidance on the rollout. Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan (R) called it a "significant step toward providing additional protection for our most vulnerable residents." Maryland, he noted, had already begun providing booster shots for elderly residents in nursing homes. "While this action was long overdue, I am glad that the federal government has finally approved booster shots for seniors and high-risk individuals," he said.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2021/09/24/dc-covid-booster-vaccine/>

Margaret Keenan: First UK person to get the Pfizer jab gets booster

A woman who became the first person in the world to get the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine has had her booster. Margaret Keenan, 91, from Coventry, got her third injection at University Hospital in the city on Friday, the same place she was first vaccinated. Also getting the booster was Matron May Parsons, who administered Ms Keenan's first jab back in December, Ms Keenan said she felt happy she had got it done and that it meant she felt free. The UK has administered more than 48 million first doses of coronavirus vaccine so far. Booster jabs are being offered to the over-50s, younger adults with health conditions and frontline health and care workers.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-coventry-warwickshire-58680014>

States Begin a Complex Booster Shot Rollout for Pfizer Recipients

State health officials rushed on Friday to roll out campaigns to provide coronavirus booster shots for millions of vulnerable people who got the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and to help a confused public understand who qualifies for the extra shots. Among their challenges: making sure that recipients of the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines know that they are not yet eligible for boosters, reaching isolated elderly people and informing younger adults with medical conditions or jobs that place them at higher risk that they might be eligible under the broad federal rules. "Those of us overseeing vaccine rollouts don't have a clear idea of what to do," said Dr. Clay Marsh, West Virginia's Covid-19 czar.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/24/us/politics/vaccine-boosters-rollout-states.html>

New York Hospitals Face Possible Mass Firings as Workers Spurn Vaccines

In Buffalo, the Erie County Medical Center plans to suspend elective in-patient surgeries and not take intensive-care patients from other hospitals because it may soon fire about 400 employees who have chosen not to get vaccinated against the coronavirus. Officials at Northwell Health, New York's largest provider of health care, estimate that they might have to fire thousands of people who have refused to get vaccinated. And while the vast majority of staff members at New York City's largest private hospital network, NewYork-Presbyterian, had been vaccinated as of this week, more than

200 employees faced termination because they had not.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/24/nyregion/coronavirus-hospitals-vaccines.html>

Education Secretary Cardona backs mandatory coronavirus vaccinations for students

Education Secretary Miguel Cardona said Thursday he supports mandatory coronavirus vaccinations for older teenagers, saying vaccines are critical to keeping students in school. "I wholeheartedly support it," he said. "It's the best tool that we have to safely reopen schools and keep them open. We don't want to have the yo-yo effect that many districts had last year, and we can prevent that by getting vaccinated." Cardona said that in general, he believes governors, not school superintendents, should implement the mandates. "I really want to make sure that governors and health officials are driving the communication around public health measures, which vaccinations are," he said.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2021/09/23/education-secretary-student-covid-vaccine-mandates/>

Partisan Exits

A Canadian COVID-19 study that turned out to be wrong has spread like wildfire among anti-vaxxers

An inaccurate Canadian study suggesting an extremely high rate of heart inflammation after COVID-19 vaccines has been retracted due to a major mathematical error — but not before it spread like wildfire on anti-vaccination websites and social media. The preprint study, which was released by researchers at the Ottawa Heart Institute last week but has not been peer-reviewed, looked at the rate of myocarditis and pericarditis cases after Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccinations in Ottawa from June 1 to July 31. The study identified 32 patients with the rare side effects out of a total of 32,379 doses of mRNA vaccines given in Ottawa in the two-month period, finding an inordinately high rate of close to 1 in 1,000 — significantly higher than other international data has shown. But the researchers made a critical error that experts say caused the study to be "weaponized" by the anti-vaccination movement at a time when concern over COVID-19 vaccine side effects are top of mind for parents whose kids may soon get the shot.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/health/covid-19-vaccine-study-error-anti-vaxxers-1.6188806>

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<https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/24/asia/turkmenistan-covid-free-nations-intl-hnk-dst/index.html>

The architect of Sweden's no-lockdown COVID-19 response said the approach was basically correct

Sweden's chief epidemiologist stood by the country's approach to the pandemic, even after facing fierce criticism from experts and the King of Sweden. Anders Tegnell said Sweden had made some mistakes in its approach to the pandemic, but "did not fare very badly at all" overall. He made the comments in an interview with Unherd, a UK website that focuses on contrarian reporting. The country's chief epidemiologist hit the headlines as Sweden captured the attention of the world for resisting the imposition of strict lockdowns to control the spread of the virus, instead putting the

onus on the residents to chose what to do.

<https://uk.news.yahoo.com/architect-swedens-no-lockdown-covid-140122160.html>

Covid-19 Panel of Scientists Investigating Origins of Virus Is Disbanded

Columbia University professor Jeffrey Sachs said he has disbanded a task force of scientists probing the origins of Covid-19 in favor of wider biosafety research. Dr. Sachs, chairman of a Covid-19 commission affiliated with the Lancet scientific journals, said he closed the task force because he was concerned about its links to EcoHealth Alliance. The New York-based nonprofit has been under scrutiny from some scientists, members of Congress and other officials since 2020 for using U.S. funds for studies on bat coronaviruses with the Wuhan Institute of Virology, a research facility in the Chinese city where the first Covid-19 outbreak occurred. EcoHealth Alliance's president, Peter Daszak, led the task force until recusing himself from that role in June. Some other members of the task force have collaborated with Dr. Daszak or EcoHealth Alliance on projects.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-panel-of-scientists-investigating-origins-of-virus-is-disbanded-11632571202>

Dutch protest against COVID-19 vaccine pass to enter bars, restaurants

Hundreds of protesters marched against the introduction of a "corona pass" in the Netherlands on Saturday, as proof of COVID-19 vaccination became compulsory to get into bars, restaurants, theatres and other venues. Hours after the requirement to show the pass or a recent negative coronavirus test took effect, the government of caretaker Prime Minister Mark Rutte sacked a cabinet minister who had publicly questioned the measure.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/dutch-marchers-protest-new-covid-19-pass-enter-bars-restaurants-2021-09-25/>

Opinion | Biden's Covid Booster Program Is Questionable

This year, it's President Biden who has gotten ahead of the F.D.A., announcing a plan to make Covid booster shots available to all vaccinated Americans long before the agency finished its evaluations of the nation's three authorized vaccines. Rather than push back against this maneuver, acting F.D.A. Commissioner Dr. Janet Woodcock endorsed it. Two of the agency's top vaccine regulators resigned in protest, taking with them a wealth of knowledge and experience that will be both urgently needed and difficult to replace in the months ahead. The kerfuffle has once again undermined an agency that is supposed to be the regulatory gold standard not just in the United States but around the world.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/25/opinion/sunday/covid-booster-shots-fda-cdc.html>

Continued Lockdown

Vietnam delays reopening resort island over low vaccination rate

Vietnam has pushed back a plan to re-open the resort island of Phu Quoc to foreign tourists until November, after failing to meet targets for inoculating residents due to insufficient vaccine supplies, state media reported. The Southeast Asian nation, which is currently shut to all visitors apart from returning citizens and investors, has been struggling to speed up inoculations to help contain a spike in COVID-19 cases driven by the Delta variant in recent months.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/vietnam-delays-reopening-resort-island-over-low-vaccination-rate-2021-09-24/>

'It breaks my heart': Australian parents say mental health strain on their children is worsening

New analysis from the Australian National University published on Friday shows like Amy, many parents or caregivers are struggling to find support for their children. In August, the university surveyed 3,135 Australians age 18 and older, 763 of whom were parents or caregivers with children age 18 and under living in their household from the time the pandemic hit. The sample had 1,368

children between them. Parents and carers were asked about the mental health of their children, and reported they had seen the largest negative impact on the mental health of those aged five to 18 years, while there were fewer concerns for children aged two to four. Co-author of the study, Prof. Nicholas Biddle, said 71% of parents and carers of young people aged 15 to 18 reported worsening mental health conditions for their children.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/sep/24/it-breaks-my-heart-australian-parents-say-mental-health-stain-on-their-children-is-worsening>

Scientific Viewpoint

Behind Covid-19 Booster Authorization Were Disagreements on Evidence, Broad Access

The Biden administration publicly touted its plan to roll out Covid-19 boosters to almost all the fully vaccinated during the week of Sept. 20, saying data from Israel supported the approach. Yet behind the scenes, federal regulators tasked with clearing boosters and recommending who should get them were locked in a pitched battle over whether the data supported the plan, according to people familiar with the matter. Some regulators argued that only certain vulnerable groups such as seniors needed an additional shot and that the decision-making timeline was too rushed, the people said. The dissenters also bristled at the Biden administration's declaration, in August, that boosters would be widely available if authorized by the Food and Drug Administration and recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, arguing it put pressure on the agencies to follow the announced course, the people said.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/behind-covid-19-booster-authorization-were-disagreements-on-evidence-broad-access-11632506540>

Since Covid-19 Hit, Research on Viruses Has Exploded. Is it Safe?

Laboratories around the globe increasingly are experimenting with emerging viruses, sometimes giving them new capabilities, as they seek to identify dangerous ones and find ways to combat them. While the goal is to protect health, some of the projects carry the chance of a misstep that could unleash an epidemic, some scientists say. Experiments in the U.S. are reviewed in advance by researchers' institutions or government funders, but risky projects can go forward without being subjected to the highest level of scrutiny, especially in some other countries. Some scientists and officials in the Biden administration are pushing for more oversight, globally, of risky bio research. One focus is laboratory work that enhances a pathogen or endows it with new properties—sometimes called “gain-of-function” research—which is often done to assess its potential to infect humans.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/since-covid-19-hit-research-on-viruses-has-exploded-is-it-safe-11632496218>

Schools without mask mandate 3.5 times more likely to have COVID-19 outbreaks: CDC study

A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) study found that schools in two Arizona counties that didn't require universal masking were 3.5 times more likely to endure COVID-19 outbreaks than schools with mask mandates. Out of the 191 schools in Maricopa and Pima counties that experienced outbreaks by the end of August, 59.2 percent did not have a mask requirement, compared to 8.4 percent that required masks from the start of the school year. Almost a third of outbreaks occurred in schools that implemented mask mandates after the school year began.

<https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/573833-schools-without-mask-mandate-35-times-more-likely-to-have-covid-19>

Pfizer in talks over full license for COVID-19 vaccine in Singapore

Pfizer Inc is in discussions with Singapore's Health Sciences Authority regarding obtaining a full license application for its COVID-19 vaccine, the company said in response to a query from Reuters. Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine has interim authorisation under the pandemic special access route in Singapore. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration granted full approval to the vaccine last

month. Kenneth Mak, Singapore's director of medical services, said in a briefing on Friday Pfizer and Moderna had not submitted applications for full registration to authorities.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/pfizer-talks-over-full-license-covid-19-vaccine-singapore-2021-09-24/>

Even Mild Cases of COVID May Leave a Mark on the Brain

With more than 18 months of the pandemic in the rearview mirror, researchers have been steadily gathering new and important insights into the effects of COVID-19 on the body and brain. These findings are raising concerns about the long-term impacts that the coronavirus might have on biological processes such as aging. As a cognitive neuroscientist, my past research has focused on understanding how normal brain changes related to aging affect people's ability to think and move – particularly in middle age and beyond. But as more evidence came in showing that COVID-19 could affect the body and brain for months or longer following infection, my research team became interested in exploring how it might also impact the natural process of aging.

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/even-mild-cases-of-covid-may-leave-a-mark-on-the-brain/>

It Took Years to Reach Vaccine Warp Speed

The story begins on Sept. 18, 2001—a week after 9/11—when the New York Post, NBC News and other media organizations received letters containing military-grade anthrax bacteria. Three weeks later, similar letters arrived at the offices of Sens. Tom Daschle and Patrick Leahy. Congress responded to this very direct threat by enacting the Bioterrorism Act of 2002, the Project Bioshield Act of 2004 and the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act of 2006. That last law established the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, or BarDA, an agency within the Department of Health and Human Services. BarDA reports to the HHS's assistant secretary of preparedness and response (the position Dr. Kadlec held during the Trump administration). Its mission is to facilitate the development of new medical products that would enable preparedness and respond to threats.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/history-operation-warp-speed-vaccine-development-covid-19-coronavirus-11632494680>

A daily pill to treat Covid could be just months away, scientists say

Within a day of testing positive for Covid-19 in June, Miranda Kelly was sick enough to be scared. At 44, with diabetes and high blood pressure, Kelly, a certified nursing assistant, was having trouble breathing, symptoms serious enough to send her to the emergency room. When her husband, Joe, 46, fell ill with the virus, too, she really got worried, especially about their five teenagers at home: "I thought: 'I hope to God we don't wind up on ventilators. We have children. Who's going to raise these kids?'" But the Kellys, who live in Seattle, had agreed just after their diagnoses to join a clinical trial at the nearby Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center that's part of an international effort to test an antiviral treatment that could halt Covid early in its course.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/daily-pill-treat-covid-could-be-just-months-away-scientists-n1279938>

Children, covid-19, and India's looming third wave

Makepeace Sitlhou reports on how covid-19 has affected children in India, and how the authorities are making plans to improve provision of care. In September 2020, 15 year old Well Done Boy Marbaniang was brought to hospital in Shillong, India, with fever, cough, and breathing difficulties. He was immediately put on non-invasive ventilation and given intravenous fluids, but just five and a half hours after his admission, Marbaniang died. He was the first child to die of covid-19 in Meghalaya. The northeastern state had the highest case fatality rate (8.3%) in India during the first wave of covid-19, and one of the highest rates of positive test results (7-8% against the national average of 2.5%) during the second wave. Around 22% of total infections through to August were in under 18s.

<https://www.bmj.com/content/374/bmj.n2328>

C.D.C. Chief Overrules Agency Panel and Endorses Pfizer Boosters for Frontline Workers

The director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Friday overruled a recommendation by an agency advisory panel that had refused to endorse booster shots of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid vaccine for frontline workers. It was a highly unusual move for the director, Dr. Rochelle Walensky, but aligned C.D.C. policy with the Food and Drug Administration's endorsements over her own agency's advisers. The C.D.C.'s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices on Thursday recommended the boosters for a wide range of Americans, including tens of millions of older adults and younger people at high risk for the disease. But they excluded health care workers, teachers and others whose jobs put them at risk. That put their recommendations at odds with the F.D.A.'s authorization of booster shots for all adults with a high occupational risk.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/24/world/covid-boosters-vaccine-cdc-director.html>

Biden tells 60 million Americans to get booster shots after CDC director overruled advisers

Biden urged Americans over 65 and with certain medical conditions or jobs to get booster shots. 'I'll be getting my booster shot,' said Biden, 78. Frontline workers and those with medical conditions like diabetes are encouraged to get jabs under new CDC guidance. CDC Director Rochelle Walensky intervened to expand eligibility

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10025501/Biden-tells-60-million-Americans-booster-shots-CDC-director-overruled-advisers.html>

Moderna CEO Stéphane Bancel says vaccines can end pandemic in one year

Moderna's chief executive says that the coronavirus pandemic could be over in a year and that a boost in production will mean enough vaccines for "everyone on this Earth" by then. More booster shots should be available, too, to some extent, and even babies will be able to get vaccines, Stéphane Bancel told a Swiss newspaper in an interview published Thursday. Asked whether that could spell "a return to normal" next year, he replied: "As of today, in a year, I assume." With the vaccine industry as a whole expanding production, "enough doses should be available by the middle of next year so that everyone on this Earth can be vaccinated," the French billionaire said.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/09/23/moderna-vaccine-covid-over-next-year/>

Coronavirus Resurgence

England series in Australia abandoned because of Covid-19 restrictions

England's netball Test series in Australia has been called off because of "the evolving Covid-19 restrictions" in the host country. Jess Thirlby's side were scheduled to tour Australia in October following their first series win in New Zealand. "To get to this stage and not be able to complete the Australian leg is very saddening," said England Netball performance director David Parsons. England's players will return home in the "coming days" from New Zealand. The dates and venues for the games in Australia had yet to be confirmed as England Netball and Netball Australia worked to organise the series.

https://www.bbc.com/sport/netball/58689192?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=KARANGA

Covid Australia: ACT records 32 cases of Covid-19 amid outbreak at aged care home

There were 32 new cases of Covid-19 recorded in the ACT overnight. At least two dozen of the cases were infectious in the community. There were nine cases at an aged care home where most have been vaccinated

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10027219/Covid-Australia-ACT-records-32-cases-Covid-19-amid-outbreak-aged-care-home.html>

Covid-19 Australia: NSW records 1,007 cases as state prepares for details of new freedoms

New South Wales recorded 1,007 new Covid-19 cases and 11 deaths on Saturday State crisis cabinet met on Friday to discuss new freedoms in New South Wales Changes will be made when 80 per cent of state is vaccinated by October 25 Increased caps on social events are among expected changes to be announced State government set to formally announce the restriction changes next week

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10026741/Covid-19-Australia-NSW-records-1-007-cases-state-prepares-details-new-freedoms.html>

S.Korea's daily COVID-19 cases top 3000 for first time after holiday

South Korea's daily COVID-19 infections topped 3,000 for the first time as an outbreak fuelled by this week's three-day holiday spreads, authorities said on Saturday. Friday's 3,273 coronavirus cases surpassed the previous high a day earlier, the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) said, taking the nation's tally to 298,402 infections and 2,441 deaths.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/skorea-daily-covid-19-cases-top-3000-first-time-after-holiday-2021-09-25/>

Australia's Victoria state logs record infections ahead of key sporting event

Australia's Victoria state notched up a daily record of 847 locally acquired cases of COVID-19 and one death, government figures showed on Saturday as health officials warned the public to stay home ahead of a major national sporting final. Authorities expect case numbers in the state to keep rising until mid November as it races to raise vaccination rates above the 70% double dose threshold, up from around 46% currently.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/australias-victoria-state-logs-record-infections-ahead-key-sporting-event-2021-09-24/>

Thailand reports 11,975 new COVID-19 cases, 127 more deaths

Thailand on Saturday recorded 11,975 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 127 more fatalities from the pandemic in the past 24 hours, according to the Center for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA). Of the new infections, 3,612 cases were reported in the capital Bangkok and its neighboring provinces, according to the CCSA, the country's COVID-19 task force. The CCSA reported that 94 percent of the new deaths recorded were among senior patients aged over 60 years or patients with underlying diseases. An additional 14,700 new recoveries from the coronavirus epidemic were reported, while 3,323 COVID-19 patients remained in critical condition, according to the CCSA. For the Southeast Asian country which was hit by the pandemic last year, the accumulative number of COVID-19 infections has risen to more than 1.54 million, including 16,143 deaths.

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/asiapacific/2021-09/25/c_1310209102.htm

70% vaccinated prisoners got COVID, 93% of unvaccinated: Texas study

About 70% of fully vaccinated people in a Texas prison caught COVID-19 in an outbreak, the CDC said. The data suggests that while Delta can spread among vaccinated people, vaccines protect against severe COVID-19. Of the unvaccinated prisoners, 93% caught COVID-19, and one died, the CDC said.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/cdc-fully-vaccinated-unvaccinated-texas-prisoner-delta-covid-outbreak-19-2021-9>