

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

6th Oct 2021

One Minute Overview

'It's Like There's No Covid': Booster Shots Bring Tel Aviv Back to Life - Tel Aviv's mayor has a message for cities struggling to reopen: Covid booster shots are allowing his city to roar back to life. The mass distribution of third shots in Israel has driven down new cases and hospital admissions, allowing restaurants and shops to fill up with customers. New variants of the disease could change the pandemic's trajectory again, but for now, the boosters are working, [Mayor Ron Huldai said in an interview with Bloomberg News](#). "On the streets of Tel Aviv now, it's like there's no Covid," said Huldai, 77, [who has run Tel Aviv for more than two decades since he was elected in 1998](#). He said 99% of city workers are vaccinated.

English Schools Drop Mask Mandates, but Questions Rise Along With Cases - England took a high-stakes gamble when it sent millions of students back to school last month with neither vaccines nor a requirement to wear face masks, even as the coronavirus continued to course through the population. [On Tuesday, the country's Education Department issued its latest report card on how the plan is working: 186,000 students were absent from school on Sept. 30 with confirmed or suspected cases of the virus](#), 78 percent more than the number reported on Sept. 16, and the highest number since the pandemic began. Yet to hear many parents tell it, the bigger risk would have been to force the students to keep wearing masks or, worse, to keep them home.

Australia won't welcome foreign tourists until at least 2022 - Foreign tourists won't be welcomed back to Australia until at least next year, the prime minister said Tuesday as he outlined plans for lifting some of the toughest and longest COVID-19 travel restrictions imposed by any democracy. [The country will instead prioritize the return of skilled migrants and students after it hits Prime Minister Scott Morrison's benchmark for reopening its external borders: the full vaccination of 80% of the population aged 16 and older](#). It is expected to reach that point Tuesday. The news comes just days after Morrison announced plans to allow vaccinated citizens and permanent residents to fly overseas from November for the first time since March 2020.

Thai Red Cross delivers COVID-19 vaccines to Thailand's vulnerable migrant workers - The Thai Red Cross Society kicked off a vaccination campaign on Tuesday for migrant workers, one of the country's most vulnerable groups that has been largely left behind in the broader COVID-19 inoculation rollout. [About 300 workers received their first doses along with a small number of undocumented refugees as part of a campaign due to run until the end of the month that is initially targeting 5,000 workers](#). 'The more migrant workers we're able to vaccinate, the better for the Thai people, too,' said Tej Bunnag, secretary-general of the Thai Red Cross Society.

India begins delivering Covid-19 vaccines by drone - In India, the vast landscape, difficult terrain and remote location of some of its population has presented challenges for the coronavirus vaccine drive. [Officials in the vast nation have come up with a unique solution to deliver the vaccine to such areas: by drafting in drones](#). The drones can travel up to 22 miles and could bring the country closer to its target of vaccinating each of its 950 million adults by the end of this year. The system has already been used to transport Covid vaccines from a hospital in north east state of Manipur to a health centre on Karang Island, which lies 10 miles away in the middle of a lake.

Covid-19: November vaccines 'likely' for 12 to 15-year-olds - It is likely to be November before most schools in Northern Ireland begin to vaccinate 12 to 15-year-old pupils. Letters and consent forms for the Covid-19 vaccine are expected to be sent to parents of eligible children in mid-to-late October, according to the Public Health Agency (PHA). [The UK's four chief medical officers have recommended healthy 12 to 15-year-olds be offered one vaccine dose.](#) Vaccinations for pupils in Scotland and England are already taking place. However, the approach being taken by each nation differs.

Three Vatican Swiss Guards 'resign' after refusing to get Covid vaccine - Three Vatican Swiss Guards have reportedly resigned after refusing to get the coronavirus vaccine. The guards left on a "voluntary" basis, according to a spokesperson for the corps, following the Holy See's enforcement of new Covid-19 measures. [Another three unvaccinated members who decided to get the jab have been temporarily suspended until they are fully inoculated, Swiss newspaper Tribune de Geneva reported.](#) A spokesperson for the Swiss Guards, the elite colourfully dressed corps that protects the pope, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

COVID-19: AstraZeneca requests emergency authorisation in US or drug that reduces risk of developing coronavirus symptoms by 77% - AstraZeneca has requested US authorisation for emergency use of its new treatment to prevent COVID-19 in people who have a lessened response to vaccines because of a weakened immune system. The drugmaker included data in its filing with the Food and Drug [Administration from a late-stage trial showing the jab reduced the risk of people developing any coronavirus symptoms by 77%.](#) The antibody therapy, called AZD7442, could be used to protect people who do not have a strong enough immune response to COVID vaccines, or as a booster for those such as military personnel, AstraZeneca said.

Merck and Ridgeback Biotherapeutics' Oral Antiviral COVID-19 Treatment Reduces Risk of Hospitalization or Death by 50% - Merck, known as MSD outside of the United States and Canada, and Ridgeback Therapeutics announced on Oct. 1st, 2021, that their investigational oral antiviral medicine molnupiravir significantly reduced severe outcomes associated with COVID-19. [According to a planned interim analysis, molnupiravir reduced the risk of hospitalization or death by 50% in non-hospitalized adult COVID-19 patients with mild-to-moderate symptoms.](#) According to a company press release, 7.3% of patients who received molnupiravir (28/385) were either hospitalized or died through Day 29 of the study. Conversely, 14.1% of patients given placebo (53/377) were either hospitalized or died as a result of COVID-19 through Day 29. Additionally, no patients that were given molnupiravir died, whereas eight of those given the placebo did.

Spain approves COVID booster shot for over 70s - Spain on Tuesday approved administering of third doses of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, which are based on the same messenger RNA technology, for people aged 70 or over, the health ministry said. [Spain has fully vaccinated around 78% of its population, and authorised the booster shot from six months after people receive their second jab, the ministry said in a statement.](#) The campaign to administer the boosters will begin at the end of October. The country had already authorised booster shots for cancer patients, nursing home residents and other vulnerable groups.

Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness drops after 6 months, study shows - The effectiveness of the Pfizer Inc/BioNTech SE vaccine in preventing infection by the coronavirus dropped to 47% from 88% six months after the second dose, according to data published on Monday that U.S. health agencies considered when deciding on the need for booster shots. [The data, which was published in the Lancet medical journal, had been previously released in August ahead of peer review.](#) The analysis showed that the vaccine's effectiveness in preventing hospitalization and death remained high at 90% for at least six months, even against the highly contagious Delta variant of the coronavirus.

UK hospitals could struggle even if COVID deaths lower this winter - epidemiologist -

Hospitals may struggle to cope if there is a significant surge of COVID-19 in England this winter even if broad vaccination means that deaths do not approach the same levels as last year, one of Britain's top epidemiologists told Reuters. [Prime Minister Boris Johnson is betting on vaccinating children and giving booster shots to vulnerable adults to avoid a winter COVID-19 lockdown this year.](#) Johnson has locked down England's economy three times to avoid COVID overwhelming the National Health Service. Neil Ferguson, director of MRC Centre for Global Infectious Disease Analysis and Jameel Institute, Imperial College London, said that the coming months were uncertain but could put strain on hospitals

Kremlin blames record COVID-19 deaths on slow vaccination rate - Russia reported 895 new COVID-19 deaths on Tuesday, the most recorded in a single day since the pandemic began, with the Kremlin blaming the slow pace of vaccinations and a more virulent virus. [Cases are rising after a third wave over the summer and officials are considering bringing back safety restrictions, although they say a Moscow lockdown is not being looked at.](#) The coronavirus task force reported 25,110 new coronavirus cases in the last 24 hours. The record daily death toll is Russia's sixth in recent weeks.

Lockdown Exit

Arizona can't use COVID money for anti-mask grants, feds say

The Biden administration on Tuesday ordered Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey to stop using the state's federal pandemic funding on a pair of new education grants that can only be directed to schools without mask mandates. In a letter to Ducey, the Treasury Department said the grant programs are "not a permissible use" of the federal funding. It's the latest attempt by the Biden administration to push back against Republican governors who have opposed mask mandates and otherwise sought to use federal pandemic funding to advance their own agendas. Ducey, a Republican, created the grant programs in August to put pressure on school districts that have defied the state's ban on mask mandates.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-doug-ducey-arizona-health-education-eeef3cfa74d609eecdcc71d6c2cdd3c>

How has COVID-19 affected Australia's homeless?

When Melbourne went into lockdown between March and October last year, the city's rough sleepers were considered to be at high risk. Without a secure and isolated place in which to lock down, the concern was that they could easily catch and transmit COVID-19. The Victorian government responded by providing funding for people experiencing homelessness to access hotel rooms across the city, which were empty due to the lack of tourists. Dave Lovelock is an outreach worker at Launch Housing, a not-for-profit organisation that assists people experiencing homelessness. Launch Housing are one of a number of similar organisations who were involved with the government hotel programme due to their close connections with rough sleepers. Dave Lovelock's job was to scour the streets to find people who were at risk of rough sleeping during the pandemic and offer them a place to stay at one of the designated hotels.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2021/10/5/how-has-covid-19-affected-australias-homeless>

AstraZeneca Submits Preventive Covid-19 Treatment for FDA Authorization

The company asked U.S. regulators for emergency-use authorization for an antibody drug that earlier this year showed strong efficacy in preventing symptomatic Covid-19, offering a potential alternative in evading the disease.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/preventive-covid-19-treatment-submitted-for-fda-authorization-11633428799>

English Schools Drop Mask Mandates, but Questions Rise Along With Cases

England took a high-stakes gamble when it sent millions of students back to school last month with neither vaccines nor a requirement to wear face masks, even as the coronavirus continued to course through the population. On Tuesday, the country's Education Department issued its latest report card on how the plan is working: 186,000 students were absent from school on Sept. 30 with confirmed or suspected cases of the virus, 78 percent more than the number reported on Sept. 16, and the highest number since the pandemic began. Yet to hear many parents tell it, the bigger risk would have been to force the students to keep wearing masks or, worse, to keep them home.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/05/world/europe/england-schools-masks-mandate.html>

EU Panel May Start Accelerated Review of Merck's Covid Pill

A European Union advisory committee will consider starting an accelerated review for Merck & Co.'s experimental antiviral pill against Covid-19 following the company's announcement last week that it will seek emergency-use authorization from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration as soon as possible. The panel will consider starting a "rolling review" in coming days, Marco Cavaleri, the head of biological health threats and vaccines strategy at the European Medicines Agency, said at a press briefing Tuesday. That's a procedure where data is evaluated as it becomes available to speed up the process. Merck's new drug, molnupiravir, has led to optimism about the course of the pandemic after early studies show the drug has the potential to cut the rate of hospitalization and death by around 50% in mild to moderate Covid patients.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-10-05/eu-panel-may-start-accelerated-review-of-merck-s-covid-pill>

'It's Like There's No Covid': Booster Shots Bring Tel Aviv Back to Life

Tel Aviv's mayor has a message for cities struggling to reopen: Covid booster shots are allowing his city to roar back to life. The mass distribution of third shots in Israel has driven down new cases and hospital admissions, allowing restaurants and shops to fill up with customers. New variants of the disease could change the pandemic's trajectory again, but for now, the boosters are working, Mayor Ron Huldai said in an interview with Bloomberg News. "On the streets of Tel Aviv now, it's like there's no Covid," said Huldai, 77, who has run Tel Aviv for more than two decades since he was elected in 1998. He said 99% of city workers are vaccinated.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-10-05/covid-booster-shots-bring-tel-aviv-back-to-life>

Australia won't welcome foreign tourists until at least 2022

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<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-lifestyle-business-scott-morrison-travel-0e0dea481cefe0952e19f6315b6955ee>

Exit Strategies

Vaccines are here. School's open. Some parents still agonize

Eight days into the school year, all five of Amber Cessac's daughters, ages 4 to 10, had tested positive for COVID-19. Having them all sick at once and worrying about long-term repercussions as other parents at their school, and even her own mother, downplayed the virus, "broke something inside of me," Cessac said. "The anxiety and the stress has sort of been bottled up," she said. "It just felt so, I don't know, defeating and made me feel so helpless." Like parents everywhere, Cessac has been dealing with pandemic stress for over 18 months now.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-lifestyle-business-stress-education-6d8436b05d64cbd831c69801a1009ce4>

Rapid COVID-19 tests increasingly scarce, pricey as demand from employers jumps

Surging demand for COVID-19 tests from U.S. employers has exacerbated a nationwide shortage of rapid tests in recent weeks and is driving up costs for state and local testing programs, according to industry executives and state officials. Testmakers including Abbott Laboratories, Quidel Corp and LumiraDX Ltd are scaling up production to meet rising demand. But significantly boosting test output will take weeks to months, half a dozen industry executives told Reuters, making the tests harder to procure in the near term.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/rapid-covid-19-tests-increasingly-scarce-pricey-demand-employers-jumps-2021-10-05/>

Zimbabwe: Low Vaccine Uptake Threatens Covid-19 December Herd Immunity Target

Public policy think tank, the Zimbabwe Democracy Institute (ZDI) says a drop in vaccine uptake is threatening the country's Covid-19 December 2021 herd immunity target. According to an Access to Public Health Monitoring Report for September, ZDI blamed the drop in vaccine uptake to lack of strategy in terms of information dissemination. "The achievement of Covid-19 herd immunity in Zimbabwe by December 2021 appears to be facing a challenge of a significant drop in vaccine uptake. Between 26 July 2021 and 26 August there was an increase of 962 036 vaccinations done in Zimbabwe. "However, during the same period from 26 August 2021 to 26 September 2021 an increase in vaccinations stood at 583 484. This drop in vaccination rate can be attributed to lack of a strategy to break the existing rural-urban divide in terms of information and awareness on Covid-19 vaccination and the need to reach a target of herd immunity.

<https://allafrica.com/stories/202110050906.html>

Biden's new vaccine requirement has Republicans ready with lawsuits, while business groups seek more details

President Biden's planned vaccine requirement faces a number of tests in coming weeks, as at least two dozen Republican-controlled states prepare legal challenges, setting up a clash between the federal government and local officials that could ultimately determine the fate of the rule. The Labor Department has moved slowly in designing the rule, which White House officials said will require companies with more than 100 employees to institute mandatory vaccination or testing protocols for their staffs. Top administration officials have been working carefully to ensure the proposal is ironclad, and some have been heartened to see anecdotal evidence that companies and local governments implementing vaccine requirements have seen large-scale cooperation.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/10/05/osha-vaccine-requirement-republicans/>

New Zealand to phase out zero-covid strategy, Jacinda Ardern says

After months of back-and-forth between virus-free life and lockdowns, New Zealand will phase out its pursuit of zero covid-19 cases and instead rely on vaccines to allow the country to live with the coronavirus. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said on Monday that New Zealand will transition from relying on harsh restrictions, instead using vaccines and "everyday public health measures" to keep residents safe. She added that the change was one "we were always going to make over time." But the delta variant, Ardern said, had "accelerated" this transition. New Zealand's admission that it cannot fully eliminate the virus and must instead learn to live with it marks a dramatic shift from the strategy it had employed throughout the pandemic

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/10/05/new-zealand-zero-covid-strategy/>

Western Australia mandates COVID-19 vaccine for miners, natural gas workers

Western Australia said that it would require all employees that work with natural resources to have a first COVID-19 shot from December to help protect vulnerable Indigenous communities as the

country begins opening up. People working in mining, oil and gas exploration are required to have their first dose by Dec. 1 and must be fully vaccinated by Jan. 1, the government said. The mandate also applies to any workers flying in and out of remote sites and any visitors to these operations, it said. "The new directions will address the risks posed by movement of resources sector workers... to and from regional and remote locations in WA, with many sites and operations located at or near remote Aboriginal communities," State Premier Mark McGowan said

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/western-australia-mandates-covid-19-vaccine-miners-natural-gas-workers-2021-10-05/>

Ireland coming 'close to suppressing' Covid - Nolan

In Ireland, the population seems to have come close to suppressing Covid-19 and "we're in a good place" in relation to lifting the remaining restrictions by 22 October, NPHET's Prof Philip Nolan has said. The Chair of NPHET's Epidemiological Modelling Advisory Group said suppressing the virus is down to very high levels of vaccination and the adherence to public health measures. Speaking on RTÉ's News at One, he said: "We're fortunate with our very high level of vaccinations and frankly the very sensible manner in which each and every one of us is taking the precautions, we seem to have come close to suppressing what is a very transmissible virus."

<https://www.rte.ie/news/coronavirus/2021/1005/1250805-coronavirus-ireland/>

Thai Red Cross delivers COVID-19 vaccines to Thailand's vulnerable migrant workers

The Thai Red Cross Society kicked off a vaccination campaign on Tuesday for migrant workers, one of the country's most vulnerable groups that has been largely left behind in the broader COVID-19 inoculation rollout. About 300 workers received their first doses along with a small number of undocumented refugees as part of a campaign due to run until the end of the month that is initially targeting 5,000 workers. "The more migrant workers we're able to vaccinate, the better for the Thai people, too," said Tej Bunnag, secretary-general of the Thai Red Cross Society.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/thai-red-cross-delivers-covid-19-vaccines-thailands-vulnerable-migrant-workers-2021-10-05/>

Covid-19 numbers are improving. Don't let history repeat itself with yet another resurgence, doctors say

As Covid-19 numbers gradually improve in the U.S., health experts have an urgent message: Don't get cocky and relax. "We can't get overconfident. Every time we do and we put our guard down ... we get another surge with another variant," said Dr. Jorge Rodriguez, a viral researcher and internal medicine physician. "So yes, things are better. But they're far from over." On average, 107,312 new cases were reported each day over the past week, according to data from Johns Hopkins University, the lowest since August 5.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/04/health/us-coronavirus-monday/index.html>

Australia to buy experimental Covid-19 drug - Morrison

Australia is to purchase 300,000 courses of Merck & Co's experimental antiviral pill, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said. The announcement came as Victoria logged the highest number of daily Covid-19 infections of any state in the country since the pandemic began. Molnupiravir, which would be the first oral antiviral medication for Covid-19 if it gets regulatory approval, could halve the chances of dying or being hospitalised for people most at risk of contracting severe Covid-19, according to experts.

<https://www.rte.ie/news/coronavirus/2021/1005/1250764-global-covid/>

Covid-19 cases are declining but remain high among children. Here's what the US needs to do to end the surge

After weeks of a troubling Covid-19 surge across the US, infection rates are finally on the decline -- but experts say there's still work to be done before the tide can be turned, especially when cases

remain exceptionally high among children. "I am worried that we still have some tough days ahead," said Dr. Ashish Jha, the Dean at Brown University School of Public Health. "Even though we're doing reasonably well on vaccines, we've got to do much better because the Delta variant is very good at finding people who are unvaccinated and infecting them."

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/05/health/us-coronavirus-tuesday/index.html>

Covid-19: November vaccines 'likely' for 12 to 15-year-olds

It is likely to be November before most schools in Northern Ireland begin to vaccinate 12 to 15-year-old pupils. Letters and consent forms for the Covid-19 vaccine are expected to be sent to parents of eligible children in mid-to-late October, according to the Public Health Agency (PHA). The UK's four chief medical officers have recommended healthy 12 to 15-year-olds be offered one vaccine dose. Vaccinations for pupils in Scotland and England are already taking place. However, the approach being taken by each nation differs.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-58795317>

India begins delivering Covid-19 vaccines by drone

In India, the vast landscape, difficult terrain and remote location of some of its population has presented challenges for the coronavirus vaccine drive. Officials in the vast nation have come up with a unique solution to deliver the vaccine to such areas; by drafting in drones. The drones can travel up to 22 miles and could bring the country closer to its target of vaccinating each of its 950 million adults by the end of this year. The system has already been used to transport Covid vaccines from a hospital in north east state of Manipur to a health centre on Karang Island, which lies 10 miles away in the middle of a lake.

<https://www.itv.com/news/2021-10-05/india-begins-delivering-covid-19-vaccines-by-drone>

Partisan Exits

Walz calls for vaccine and testing requirements for teachers

Gov. Tim Walz called on lawmakers Tuesday to approve a series of new moves to respond to the fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, including vaccine and testing requirements for teachers, school staff, and long-term care workers, and measures to relieve strained hospital capacity. The Democratic governor detailed his proposal in a letter to lawmakers that he released after meeting privately with legislative leaders. He urged lawmakers to approve the measures during a special session that was originally envisioned for last month to approve a \$250 million bonus package for frontline workers who risked their lives in the pandemic. Negotiations on that plan have yet to produce an agreement and missed a Labor Day target for completion. Since then, the governor has proposed that the special session also include drought relief for farmers. But Walz has also insisted that Senate Republicans agree not to use the special session to fire Health Commissioner Jan Malcolm, as some senators have threatened.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-covid-19-pandemic-health-366fd00b91a66fa8d1911c82d7dc419d>

Anti-vaccine villagers in Guatemala hold coronavirus team

Anti-vaccine residents of a village in Guatemala seized and held a team of nurses who were trying to administer coronavirus shots Monday, authorities said. The team was held for about seven hours in the village of Nahuila, in the province of Alta Verapaz, north of Guatemala City. The villagers said they didn't want the shots, and later blocked a road and let the air out of the nurses' tires. A cooler and about 50 doses of vaccine were destroyed. Police and local officials later negotiated their release. Officials said they had previously encountered villages that rejected vaccination teams, but Gabriel Sandoval, the director of the provincial health department, said it was the first time they faced such physical opposition.

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/anti-vaccine-villagers-guatemala-hold-coronavirus-team-80407563>

Schools could be big battleground in coronavirus vaccine mandate fight

The resistance to coronavirus vaccine mandates isn't quite what it's been cracked up to be. As businesses, hospital systems and governments have moved forward with such mandates, many of the earliest test cases have gained compliance numbers well north of 90 percent. As The Post's Philip Bump wrote last week, the numbers suggest many supposed never-vaxxers were actually in the "I'll get it if required" camp. But that doesn't mean vaccine mandates won't hit roadblocks in the months ahead. And one increasing prospect seems most likely to truly test people's true opposition to the mandates: schools requiring them. California Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) on Friday became the first governor to say that his state would mandate fully approved vaccines for schoolchildren when they are available. (The Pfizer vaccine is fully approved only for children 16 and older and authorized for emergency use for children 12 to 15.)

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/10/04/real-battle-over-vaccine-mandates-might-lie-ahead-schools/>

Sen. Lindsey Graham booed by South Carolina Republicans after promoting covid vaccine

South Carolina Republican Sen. Lindsey O. Graham was only midway through his sentence when the crowd began shouting over him. "If you haven't had the vaccine, you ought to think about getting it because if you're my age — " "No!" attendees at a Republican event held Saturday responded as others booed. Graham was speaking at a country club in Summerville, S.C., about 25 miles outside Charleston. Bowing his head and holding up a hand, the 66-year-old — who got his coronavirus vaccine in December — responded to the crowd, telling them: "I didn't tell you to get it. You ought to think about it."

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/10/05/lindsey-graham-booed-coronavirus-vaccine/>

Three Vatican Swiss Guards 'resign' after refusing to get Covid vaccine

Three Vatican Swiss Guards have reportedly resigned after refusing to get the coronavirus vaccine. The guards left on a "voluntary" basis, according to a spokesperson for the corps, following the Holy See's enforcement of new Covid-19 measures. Another three unvaccinated members who decided to get the jab have been temporarily suspended until they are fully inoculated, Swiss newspaper Tribune de Geneva reported. A spokesperson for the Swiss Guards, the elite colourfully dressed corps that protects the pope, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/vatican-swiss-guards-covid-vaccine-b1932484.html>

New York protesters chant 'save Australia' following Covid-19 vaccine mandates for teachers

Protesters in New York were seen chanting 'Save Australia' during bizarre rallies. Many were protesting against vaccine mandates for teachers in the US city. They referenced similar mandates in Victoria and never-ending lockdowns. White House Press Secretary was questioned on 'disturbing images' in Australia

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10060673/New-York-protesters-chant-save-Australia-following-Covid-19-vaccine-mandates-teachers.html>

By ending Covid elimination, Jacinda Ardern once again fails to turn compassion into policy

And so with that, a confusing 20-minute monologue in the Beehive theatre, New Zealand's virus-beating elimination strategy is over. As the Delta variant's "tentacles", to borrow the prime minister's description, creep past the Auckland border, potentially wrapping themselves around parts of the Waikato, the government will no longer aim to cut the monster off at its head with tough alert level four restrictions. Instead public health officials will move to a suppression strategy aiming "to contain and control the virus" while we vaccinate our way out of the pandemic. At its simplest, Jacinda Ardern's message from the theatre was vaccinate, vaccinate, vaccinate. For 18 months New Zealanders were living life as if there were no pandemic. We were gathering outdoors and

indoors in the thousands, mask mandates were literally a foreign concept, and business and public services were operating more or less as normal.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2021/oct/05/by-ending-covid-elimination-jacinda-ardern-once-again-fails-to-turn-compassion-into-policy>

Doctors grow frustrated over COVID-19 denial, misinformation

The COVID-19 patient's health was deteriorating quickly at a Michigan hospital, but he was having none of the doctor's diagnosis. Despite dangerously low oxygen levels, the unvaccinated man didn't think he was that sick and got so irate over a hospital policy forbidding his wife from being at his bedside that he threatened to walk out of the building. Dr. Matthew Trunsky didn't hold back in his response: "You are welcome to leave, but you will be dead before you get to your car," he said. Such exchanges have become all-too-common for medical workers who are growing weary of COVID-19 denial and misinformation that have made it exasperating to treat unvaccinated patients during the delta-driven surge.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-misinformation-health-433991ea434e12ccfd97b5db415310d>

Australia's far right gets COVID anti-lockdown protest booster

Recent anti-lockdown protests in Melbourne have exposed the rise of the far-right movement over fears stemming from the coronavirus pandemic, unemployment, and continuing lockdown measures. The most recent — and arguably most violent — protests were sparked by the state government's decision to suspend work on building sites for two weeks and make vaccination mandatory for construction workers. Construction workers protesting at the trade union offices in Melbourne, Australia's second-biggest city, were joined by several other groups, many from far-right backgrounds. The protest soon turned violent, with police responding with rubber bullets, tear gas and pepper spray. "Very quickly we saw 'freedom marchers' join the protests [with] other right-wing antagonists," far-right analyst Josh Roose, a senior research fellow at the Alfred Deakin Institute in Melbourne, told Al Jazeera.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/10/5/australias-far-right-gets-covid-19-booster>

Scientific Viewpoint

Long Covid Symptoms May Be Caused by Micro Clots, Scientists Say

Some of the symptoms of so-called long-covid, the ailments that can persist for months after a Covid-19 infection, may be caused by inflammatory molecules trapped inside tiny blood clots, a scientist at South Africa's Stellenbosch University said. High levels of inflammatory molecules were found in micro clots in blood samples from people with long-covid, Resia Pretorius, a researcher at the university, said in a statement on Monday. The molecules contained fibrinogen, a clotting protein, and alpha(2)-antiplasmin, which prevents the breakdown of blood clots, she said. These "might be the cause of some of the lingering symptoms experienced by individuals with long-covid," the university said in the statement. This "provides further evidence that Covid-19, and now long-covid, have significant cardiovascular and clotting pathologies."

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-10-05/long-covid-symptoms-may-be-caused-by-micro-clots-scientists-say>

Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness drops after 6 months, study shows

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<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/pfizerbiontech-covid-19-vaccine-effectiveness-drops-after-6-months-study-2021-10-04/>

Spain approves COVID booster shot for over 70s

Spain on Tuesday approved administering of third doses of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, which are based on the same messenger RNA technology, for people aged 70 or over, the health ministry said. Spain has fully vaccinated around 78% of its population, and authorised the booster shot from six months after people receive their second jab, the ministry said in a statement. The campaign to administer the boosters will begin at the end of October. The country had already authorised booster shots for cancer patients, nursing home residents and other vulnerable groups.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/spain-approves-covid-booster-shot-over-70s-2021-10-05/>

Johnson & Johnson seeks emergency authorization from FDA for coronavirus booster shot

Johnson & Johnson asked the Food and Drug Administration on Tuesday to grant emergency use authorization for a booster dose of its single-shot coronavirus vaccine. The action is part of an effort by Biden administration officials to provide increased protection against covid-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus, which has claimed more than 700,000 lives in the United States. Johnson & Johnson “is asking the FDA to look at our data and agree with us that we have enough data to support a boost” for people 18 and older, said Mathai Mammen, global head of research and development for the Janssen Pharmaceuticals division of Johnson & Johnson.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2021/10/05/johnson-johnson-booster-covid-vaccine/>

CHMP positive option for Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine in the EU

Pfizer and BioNTech have announced that the Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use (CHMP) has issued a positive opinion for the administration of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine as a booster shot six months after the second dose. CHMP, part of the EMA, has approved the use of the booster jab for individuals over the age of 18. Following the CHMP positive opinion, the European Commission (EC) will make a final decision on its update to the vaccine’s current Conditional Marketing Authorisation in the EU. In the clinical trial data provided by Pfizer and BioNTech, the COVID-19 vaccine, Comirnaty, was found to elicit significantly higher neutralising antibody titers against SARS-CoV-2, and protection from both the Beta and Delta variants of the disease.

https://www.pharmatimes.com/news/chmp_positive_option_for_pfizer-biontech_covid-19_vaccine_in_the_eu_1379864

Merck and Ridgeback Biotherapeutics’ Oral Antiviral COVID-19 Treatment Reduces Risk of Hospitalization or Death by 50%

Merck, known as MSD outside of the United States and Canada, and Ridgeback Therapeutics announced on Oct. 1st, 2021, that their investigational oral antiviral medicine molnupiravir significantly reduced severe outcomes associated with COVID-19. According to a planned interim analysis, molnupiravir reduced the risk of hospitalization or death by 50% in non-hospitalized adult COVID-19 patients with mild-to-moderate symptoms. According to a company press release, 7.3% of patients who received molnupiravir (28/385) were either hospitalized or died through Day 29 of the study. Conversely, 14.1% of patients given placebo (53/377) were either hospitalized or died as a result of COVID-19 through Day 29. Additionally, no patients that were given molnupiravir died, whereas eight of those given the placebo did.

<https://www.pharmtech.com/view/merck-and-ridgeback-biotherapeutics-oral-antiviral-covid-19-treatment-reduces-risk-of-hospitalization-or-death-by-50->

COVID-19: AstraZeneca requests emergency authorisation in US for drug that reduces risk of developing coronavirus symptoms by 77%

AstraZeneca has requested US authorisation for emergency use of its new treatment to prevent COVID-19 in people who have a lessened response to vaccines because of a weakened immune system. The drugmaker included data in its filing with the Food and Drug Administration from a late-

stage trial showing the jab reduced the risk of people developing any coronavirus symptoms by 77%. The antibody therapy, called AZD7442, could be used to protect people who do not have a strong enough immune response to COVID vaccines, or as a booster for those such as military personnel, AstraZeneca said.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-astrazeneca-requests-emergency-authorisation-in-us-or-drug-that-reduces-risk-of-developing-coronavirus-symptoms-by-77-12426338>

COVID-19: Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine effectiveness wanes to 47% against infection after six months

Two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine are 90% effective against COVID-19 hospitalisation for at least six months but only 47% effective against infection after that period, according to a new study. The peer-reviewed analysis of the coronavirus jab, published in The Lancet, also found that reductions in the vaccine's effectiveness against COVID-19 infection was due to this waning over time rather than the Delta variant escaping protection. Researchers analysed the electronic health records of 3,426,957 people who had received the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine as part of the study, 5.4% of which (184,041) belonged to people who were infected and 6.6% (12,130) of those which were hospitalised.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-pfizer-biontech-vaccine-effectiveness-wanes-to-47-against-infection-after-six-months-12426406>

J&J seeks US clearance for COVID-19 vaccine booster doses

Johnson & Johnson asked the Food and Drug Administration on Tuesday to allow extra shots of its COVID-19 vaccine as the U.S. government moves toward expanding its booster campaign to millions more vaccinated Americans. J&J said it filed a request with the FDA to authorize boosters for people 18 and older who previously received the company's one-shot vaccine. While the company said it submitted data on several different booster intervals, ranging from two to six months, it did not formally recommend one to regulators. Last month, the FDA authorized booster shots of Pfizer's vaccine for older Americans and other groups with heightened vulnerability to COVID-19. It's part of a sweeping effort by the Biden administration to shore up protection amid the delta variant and potential waning vaccine immunity.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-science-business-coronavirus-vaccine-health-8692f5cba58e8f98c97b99a49a7dc535>

EU regulator OKs Pfizer vaccine booster for 18 and older

The European Union's drug regulator gave its backing Monday to administering booster shots of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for people 18 and older. The European Medicines Agency said the booster doses "may be considered at least 6 months after the second dose for people aged 18 years and older." The agency's human medicines committee issued the recommendation after studying data for the Pfizer vaccine that showed a rise in antibody levels following boosters given around 6 months after the second dose in people from 18 to 55 years old. The agency also said it supports giving a third dose of either the Pfizer-BioNTech or the Moderna vaccine to people with severely weakened immune systems at least 28 days after their second shot.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-business-european-union-europe-coronavirus-vaccine-c045dcf8099d8bbe4144ce61bd8e1a6a>

Merck's molnupiravir will be 'complementary, but not a competitor' to COVID-19 vaccines: analyst

What do Merck's eye-opening data, recently released for its antiviral molnupiravir on high-risk COVID-19 patients, mean for manufacturers of vaccines? Analysts from the ODDO BHF financial services group see little impact in the short and intermediate term. Even though inoculation rates are low in most lesser developed countries, ODDO says it's unlikely that countries will shift away

from vaccination campaigns to focus primarily on treating high-risk patients with COVID. This is the case despite trial data showing molnupiravir providing a 50% reduction in the hospitalization rate and a 100% reduction in the death rate among patients within five days of symptomatic illness. “The impact on vaccine manufacturers such as Moderna should be limited,” ODDO wrote in a report to investors. “We believe that molnupiravir can be complementary to the COVID-19 vaccine but not a competitor.”

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/merck-s-molnupiravir-will-be-complementary-but-not-a-competitor-to-covid-19-vaccines-analyst>

Why U.S. pandemic management has failed: lack of attention to America’s epidemic engines

Few U.S. journalists, politicians, or public health officials expressed any extraordinary concern when reports of a novel respiratory virus began to emerge out of China in late 2019 and early 2020. After all, the U.S. had just ranked number one among 195 countries in the 2019 Global Health Security Index — the first major comparative assessment of national capacity to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious disease outbreaks. Experts believed the wealthiest large nation on earth to be well-prepared to weather whatever might come its way. Now, nearly two years since the first documented cases of Covid-19 appeared in Wuhan, more than 700,000 U.S. residents have been killed by a pandemic during which U.S. public health management has been among the world’s worst. Despite American wealth, monopolization of the global vaccine supply, and unparalleled spending on medical care, SARS-CoV-2 has decimated U.S. communities — especially those of color and lower incomes. Repeated policy failures have paved the way for the virus to rapidly replicate, mutate, and fuel deadly outbreaks not just inside this country but worldwide.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/10/05/jails-prisons-schools-nursing-homes-america-epidemic-engines/>

What we know — and don’t know — about Merck’s new Covid-19 pill

The announcement that a pill from Merck and partner Ridgeback Biotherapeutics kept Covid patients out of the hospital made headlines and moved stocks late last week. But as is so often true when data are released by press release, there are still many questions left unanswered. Doctors are excited about the medicine, molnupiravir, because a regimen of pills, even one that involves taking several pills twice a day for five days, should be far easier to deliver to patients than current antiviral Covid-19 treatments, which must be given intravenously. But it’s still unclear how widely this treatment will be used. There will also be debate among financial analysts at investment banks regarding exactly how many billions of dollars in sales the new drug will generate.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/10/04/what-we-know-and-dont-know-about-mercks-new-covid-19-pill/>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Japan's dip in COVID-19 cases baffles experts; winter 'nightmare' still a risk

Japan's COVID-19 case numbers have plummeted to the lowest in nearly a year just as other parts of Asia are struggling with surging infections, leaving health experts perplexed and raising concern of a winter rebound. New daily cases in Tokyo dropped to 87 on Monday, the lowest tally since Nov. 2 last year, and a precipitous decline from more than 5,000 a day in an August wave that hammered the capital's medical infrastructure. The pattern is the same across the country.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japans-dip-covid-19-cases-baffles-experts-winter-nightmare-still-risk-2021-10-05/>

Number of pupils out of class due to Covid-19 rose by two thirds in a fortnight

The number of children out of school for Covid-19 related reasons in England has increased by two thirds in a fortnight, Government figures show. The Department for Education (DfE) estimates that 2.5% of all pupils – more than 204,000 children – were not in class for reasons connected to coronavirus on Thursday last week. This is up from 122,300 children, or 1.5% of all pupils, on

September 16 – a 67% rise from two weeks ago. The figures come as heads reported “a high level of disruption”, with a school leaders’ union warning that self-isolation rules are “actively contributing” to the spread of Covid-19 in schools.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/nadhim-zahawi-geoff-barton-department-for-education-government-england-b958904.html>

Kremlin blames record COVID-19 deaths on slow vaccination rate

Russia reported 895 new COVID-19 deaths on Tuesday, the most recorded in a single day since the pandemic began, with the Kremlin blaming the slow pace of vaccinations and a more virulent virus. Cases are rising after a third wave over the summer and officials are considering bringing back safety restrictions, although they say a Moscow lockdown is not being looked at. The coronavirus task force reported 25,110 new coronavirus cases in the last 24 hours. The record daily death toll is Russia's sixth in recent weeks.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russias-covid-19-deaths-hit-new-one-day-record-high-2021-10-05/>

Australia to buy Merck's COVID-19 pill, Victoria cases hit record

Australia will buy 300,000 courses of Merck & Co's experimental antiviral pill, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said on Tuesday, as Victoria logged the highest number of daily COVID-19 infections of any state in the country since the pandemic began. Molnupiravir, which would be the first oral antiviral medication for COVID-19 if it gets regulatory approval, could halve the chances of dying or being hospitalised for people most at risk of contracting severe COVID-19, according to experts. "These treatments mean that we are going to be able to live with the virus," Prime Minister Scott Morrison told Nine News on Tuesday as Australia aims to reopen its borders next month for fully vaccinated citizens and permanent residents.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/australia-buy-300000-doses-mercks-covid-19-antiviral-pill-2021-10-04/>

UK hospitals could struggle even if COVID deaths lower this winter - epidemiologist

Hospitals may struggle to cope if there is a significant surge of COVID-19 in England this winter even if broad vaccination means that deaths do not approach the same levels as last year, one of Britain's top epidemiologists told Reuters. Prime Minister Boris Johnson is betting on vaccinating children and giving booster shots to vulnerable adults to avoid a winter COVID-19 lockdown this year. Johnson has locked down England's economy three times to avoid COVID overwhelming the National Health Service. Neil Ferguson, director of MRC Centre for Global Infectious Disease Analysis and Jameel Institute, Imperial College London, said that the coming months were uncertain but could put strain on hospitals

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-hospitals-could-struggle-even-if-covid-deaths-lower-this-winter-2021-10-05/>

At a rural ICU, Covid-19's summer surge put telehealth to the test

On the surface, there's little about Whitfield Regional Hospital that would make it a safety net for Alabama's sickest Covid-19 patients. It has a small ICU with eight beds, and no critical care doctors on staff. The rural hospital has spent decades focused on caring for the community surrounding Demopolis, population 7,000, in the heart of the state's Black Belt. But over the summer, Whitfield became an unlikely landing pad for critically ill Covid-19 patients from across the entire state — with the help of a team of telemedicine specialists calling in from more than 100 miles away. As Covid-19 swept through unvaccinated communities, every ICU bed in the state was full for weeks on end — including those at the state's largest hospital, at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/10/05/telemedicine-icu-covid19-hospitals/>