

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

1st Mar 2022

Lockdown Exit

Cambridge scientists release study into effectiveness of England's Covid travel rules

Throughout the Covid pandemic travel rules were put in place to prevent the spread of the virus - part of these rules included quarantining after going abroad. Anyone arriving in England in summer 2020 was made to quarantine for 14 days, and according to new research this did have the desired effect. Cambridge scientists found that the measures put in place did reduce the spread of coronavirus. They found it was particularly effective for travellers aged 16-20. The requirement for people arriving in England to self-isolate for a fortnight was introduced on June 8 2020, following the first few months of the pandemic.

<https://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/news/cambridge-news/cambridge-scientists-release-study-effectiveness-23206214>

Nearly third more Covid deaths among England's poorest since turn of the year

At least 30 per cent more coronavirus deaths have occurred in the most deprived areas of England since the turn of the year, data shows, reinforcing concern that the poorest communities will carry the greatest burden of disease under the government's plans for "living with Covid". Of the 7,053 deaths registered in the six weeks after 1 January, 1,589 (22.5 per cent) were from the most deprived 20 per cent of the country, compared to 1,188 (16.8 per cent) in the least deprived 20 per cent. Ministers have been warned that these disparities will only widen as the government scales back free testing and mandated isolation, and removes sick payments for those ill with Covid.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/covid-death-rates-england-latest-b2023511.html>

Hong Kong to Lock Down City For Mass Testing, Sing Tao Says

Hong Kong is planning to enforce a lockdown of the city to ensure a mandatory Covid-19 testing drive planned for this month is effective, Sing Tao Daily reported. Testing of the financial hub's 7.4 million people will start after March 17, the newspaper reported, citing people it didn't identify. Officials are aiming to test the whole city three times over nine days, with a stay-at-home order in place to maximize the impact, the report said. Hong Kong's core financial services including the operations of the stock exchange and Covid vaccination program will continue during the testing period, according to the report. Officials are still working out the details, Sing Tao said. Residents will still be allowed to leave their homes to buy necessities like food during the lockdown, the Hong Kong Economic Times reported, citing unidentified people.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-02-28/hong-kong-eyes-mass-testing-with-lockdown-sing-tao-reports>

U.S. CDC says unvaccinated travelers should avoid Hong Kong travel

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Monday recommended unvaccinated travelers avoid travel to Hong Kong over rising COVID-19 cases. The CDC raised its COVID-19 level for Hong Kong from Level 1: Low to Level 3: High, one level below its highest warning level. Hong Kong is facing a record number of COVID-19 fatalities and battling to control a surge in cases. The global financial hub reported a daily record high of 34,466 new coronavirus infections and 87 deaths on Monday, health authorities said.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/us-cdc-says-unvaccinated-travelers-should-avoid-hong-kong-travel-2022-02-28/>

New Zealand ends isolation rules for vaccinated travellers from Australia as transmission

rates soar

New Zealand has ended its self-isolation requirements for vaccinated travellers arriving from Australia, as the country's Covid transmission rates soar to among the highest in the world. From Wednesday, vaccinated travellers will no longer need to self-isolate but will still be required to undergo a Covid-19 test on arrival and on day five or six, prime minister Jacinda Ardern announced on Monday. If the traveller tests positive for the virus, they will be required to self-isolate, in line with requirements for New Zealanders. Unvaccinated travellers will still have to stay in managed isolation, or MIQ.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/feb/28/previous-virus-free-new-zealand-now-has-one-of-worlds-highest-covid-transmission-rates>

Covid-19 pills will 'allow UK to fully reopen economy' as pandemic impacts weigh

Landmark Covid-19 pills will "allow the UK to fully reopen its economy", according to analysts, as the impacts of the pandemic continue to weigh on the economy. Companies including famed vaccine maker Pfizer, which has won regulatory approval for its Paxlovid pill, and Merck, have revolutionized the global immunisation process with antiviral pills. "The acceleration of the roll out of new accessible medications against Covid-19 is expected to have a meaningful impact in terms of our ability to move beyond the pandemic and will help us to learn to live with the disease in the background," Manx Financial Group CEO Douglas Grant told Business Matters. "Easy-to-take medication will be a catalyst for the return to business as usual and help remove these damaging blockages, unleashing a sector that is desperate to grow." Grant added that it is "particularly good news for the UK's SMEs" who have been disproportionately hit by the pandemic, and its longer-lasting impacts of rising costs of goods, utilities and labour, as inflation teeters on a 30-year high.

<https://bmmagazine.co.uk/news/covid-19-pills-will-allow-uk-to-fully-reopen-economy-as-pandemic-impacts-weigh/>

Covid-19: Republic of Ireland removes mask rules

The legal requirement to wear face masks in some public settings in the Republic of Ireland has been removed. It has been replaced with public health advice that masks should still be worn while on public transportation and in healthcare settings.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60548749.amp>

New Zealand gears to end Covid-19 travel curbs, travellers need not isolate

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern on Monday said the requirement that vaccinated travellers isolate for a week after arriving would end on Wednesday. Initially the changes will apply only to returning New Zealanders, as tourists are still not allowed to visit.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/lifestyle/travel/new-zealand-gears-to-end-covid-19-travel-curbs-travellers-need-not-isolate-101646052533451.html>

Italy to receive first 21 billion euros from EU Covid-19 fund - Von der Leyen

Italy will receive a first payment of 21 billion euros (\$23.53 billion) from the "Next Generation EU" fund to help states compensate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, EU Commission head Ursula von der Leyen said on Monday.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/italy-receive-first-21-billion-euros-eu-covid-19-fund-von-der-leyen-2022-02-28/>

Exit Strategies

Pfizer/BioNTech COVID vaccine less effective in ages 5-11 -New York study

Two doses of the Pfizer Inc and BioNTech SE COVID-19 vaccine was protective against severe disease in children aged 5 to 11 during the recent Omicron variant surge, but quickly lost most of its ability to prevent infection in the age group, according to a study by New York State researchers. The vaccine's efficacy against infection among those children declined to 12% at the end of January from 68% in mid-December compared to kids who did not get vaccinated, according the study,

which has not yet been peer reviewed.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/pfizerbiontech-covid-vaccine-less-effective-ages-5-11-new-york-study-2022-02-28/>

USAID boosts Jamaica's push to get COVID-19 vaccines to private health facilities

In Jamaica, eight private entities in the health sector have signed grants totalling US\$600,000 with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to continue the roll-out of the health ministry's outsourcing of COVID-19 vaccines. The ministry is trying to administer 75,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines through private entities. So far, approximately 17,000 doses have been given outside of the public health system, state minister for health Juliet Cuthbert Flynn noted during a signing ceremony

https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/usa-id-boosts-jamaica-s-push-to-get-covid-19-vaccines-to-private-health-facilities_244997?profile=1338&template=MobileArticle

90% adolescents administered 1st Covid-19 vaccine dose in Delhi: Data

Ninety per cent of adolescents in the age group of 15 to 18 years in Delhi have been administered the first dose of vaccine against COVID-19 since the launch of the drive on January 3, according to official data. Up to February 24, 54 per cent of them had also received the second dose of the vaccine, the data presented during a meeting of the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) earlier this week mentioned.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/90-adolescents-administered-1st-covid-19-vaccine-dose-in-delhi-data-122022700421_1.html

Vaccination very essential, will help combat 4th Covid wave, UNICEF advisor says

Though the chances of severity in children infected with Covid-19 is very low, vaccination is very essential and it would help combat the fourth wave, said Dr Mrudula Phadke, senior advisor to Government of Maharashtra and UNICEF on Child Health. Speaking about Multiple Inflammatory Syndrome of Children, a syndrome that affects almost every organ, she said "Only 1 in 10,000 children may experience severe disease on being infected with Covid-19. But there is a condition called MIS-C, where almost every organ is affected. Hence our children should be vaccinated," she insisted.

<https://www.deccanherald.com/national/vaccination-very-essential-will-help-combat-4th-covid-wave-unicef-advisor-says-1086180.html>

Covid-19: Lagging vaccination leaves the Caribbean vulnerable, says PAHO

The sluggish pace of covid-19 vaccination in the Caribbean is leaving the region vulnerable to current and future outbreaks of the disease, senior Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) officials have warned. Unlike much of Latin America, where vaccination campaigns started slowly but ramped up quickly through 2021 when more doses became available, vaccination coverage across the Caribbean remains low. Of the 13 countries in the Americas that are yet to reach the World Health Organization's 2021 goal of 40% vaccination coverage, 10 are in the Caribbean. Only regional outliers Cuba—which produces its own vaccines—and the Dominican Republic have fully vaccinated more than half of their population. Haiti, which has been hit by natural disasters and political turmoil, has fully vaccinated less than 1% of its citizens against covid-19.

<https://www.bmj.com/content/376/bmj.o519>

New Covid vaccinations drop in US as cases and hospitalizations decline

The number of new people getting vaccinated in America has steadily declined in recent months, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data. The seven-day average of new vaccinations now mirrors the rates from December 2020, when there was a limited supply of the vaccines. But doctors emphasize that the virus remains a threat in the US and that people who are not vaccinated are at greater risk of become severely ill or dying. They point to the fact that the

seven-day average of new cases on 23 February in the United States was 76,667, according to the New York Times data. On 23 February last year, the seven-day average was 67,854.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/feb/28/us-new-covid-vaccinations-decline-cases-hospitalizations-drop>

Agong encourages people to take Covid-19 booster shots

The process of transitioning Malaysia from the Covid-19 pandemic stage into endemicity must be made carefully although the country is increasingly ready to make such a transition. Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah cited several indicators which show that the country is ready to transition into the endemic phase. Among the indicators include the Nikkei Asia Covid-19 Recovery Index which ranked Malaysia at 13th spot out of 122 countries around the world. Al-Sultan Abdullah also noted that the Covid-19 National Immunisation Programme (NIP) has helped to inoculate 98 per cent of the adult population in the country.

<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2022/02/775522/agong-encourages-people-take-covid-19-booster-shots>

Analysis: Is WHO's aim to vaccinate 70% of world by June still realistic?

Vaccinating 70% of the population in every country in the world against COVID-19 by mid-2022 has been the World Health Organization's (WHO) rallying cry to end the pandemic. But recently, public health experts say that while boosting immunity globally remains essential, the figure is neither achievable nor meaningful. It has always been ambitious: Currently, just 12% of people in low-income nations have had one shot, according to Our World In Data. Earlier targets set by WHO - to reach 10% by September 2021, for example - were also missed.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/is-whos-aim-vaccinate-70-world-by-june-still-realistic-2022-02-28/>

South Korea rolls back COVID-19 vaccine pass as infections burden testing centres

South Korea will temporarily lift a requirement for vaccine passes or negative COVID-19 tests at a number of businesses to ease the strain on testing centres, authorities said on Monday, as the country faces a wave of Omicron infections. The move will allow public testing and health facilities to devote more resources to battling the wave of new cases, Interior Minister Jeon Hae-cheol told a COVID-19 response meeting.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/skorea-rolls-back-covid-19-vaccine-pass-infections-burden-testing-centres-2022-02-28/>

Nearly half of Biden's 500M free COVID tests still unclaimed

Nearly half of the 500 million free COVID-19 tests the Biden administration recently made available to the public still have not been claimed as virus cases plummet and people feel less urgency to test. Wild demand swings have been a subplot in the pandemic, from vaccines to hand sanitizer, along with tests. On the first day of the White House test giveaway in January, COVIDtests.gov received over 45 million orders. Now officials say fewer than 100,000 orders a day are coming in for the packages of four free rapid tests per household, delivered by the U.S. Postal Service.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-business-health-lifestyle-only-on-ap-57e63ac3d5c508f3d41afdedbd2aaea>

Partisan Exits

How Covid vaccine misinformation is still impacting inoculation rates in Lancashire

The Oxford-AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine has been subject to months of debate based on numerous health concerns primarily surrounding blood clots. And due to these concerns, some members of Lancashire's Asian community have been reluctant to have the jab, over worries that it is safe. Certain medical studies and reports note that one of the most common reasons for hesitancy within the British-Asian community are concerns regarding side effects and long-term effects on health.

<https://www.lancs.live/news/lancashire-news/how-covid-vaccine-misinformation-still-23218860>

Robert Kennedy Jr.'s Crusade Against Covid Vaccine Anguishes Family

Nearly 60 years after Bobby took his sister along for the excursions into the woods, the son and namesake of Robert F. Kennedy, the New York senator, attorney general and Democratic presidential candidate assassinated on June 5, 1968, has become an unimaginably polarizing figure in this tight-knit political family. Once a top environmental lawyer who led the charge to clean up the Hudson River in New York, the third eldest child of Robert and Ethel Kennedy has emerged as a leading voice in the campaign to discredit coronavirus vaccines and other measures being advanced by the Biden White House to battle a pandemic that was, near the end of February, killing close to 1,900 people a day.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/26/us/robert-kennedy-covid-vaccine.html>

Continued Lockdown

A closer look at Hong Kong's latest rules on Covid-19 testing, quarantine

Changes such as registering positive results using rapid antigen tests on a government portal can help speed up confirmation of Covid-19 infections. Close contacts who are at least double vaccinated can leave quarantine earlier if they test negative using rapid antigen kits on sixth and seventh days.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/health-environment/article/3168598/coronavirus-hong-kong-fights-fifth-wave>

Hong Kong's Covid-19 Regime Sparks Rush for Exit by Spooked Residents

For Charles Murton, one of Hong Kong's tens of thousands of expatriate residents, the city's surprise decision to shut schools next month to test its 7.4 million people for Covid-19 was the last straw. He has been drawing up plans to leave the city he immigrated to as a teenager, eyeing a move with his wife and two young children to Singapore, a perennial Hong Kong rival that continues to open its borders even as Covid-19 numbers there surge to record highs. "The virus is something that you've got to live with, but that doesn't seem to be the thought process here," said Mr. Murton, a 41-year-old logistics executive. For two years, Hong Kong largely shut out Covid-19 by at times banning travelers from certain high-risk countries, using lengthy quarantines for arrivals and social distancing, and isolating infected people and their close contacts—at the cost of effectively cutting off the global financial hub's residents from the outside world. Now, after the Omicron variant punctured the city's defenses, overwhelming hospitals and testing facilities, the city is tightening the screws in new and unpredictable ways to adhere to Beijing's zero-Covid policy of stamping out the virus whenever it appears.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/hong-kongs-covid-19-regime-sparks-rush-for-exit-by-spooked-residents-11645963200>

Scientific Viewpoint

S. Korea drops proof of vaccine, test to aid virus response

South Korea will no longer require people to show proof of vaccination or negative tests to enter any indoor space starting Tuesday, removing a key preventive measure during a fast-developing omicron surge that's elevating hospitalizations and deaths. The Health Ministry's announcement on Monday came as the country set another one-day record in COVID-19 deaths with 114, breaking the previous high of 112 set on Saturday. More than 710 COVID-19 patients were in critical or serious conditions, up from 200-300 in mid-February, while nearly half of the country's intensive care units designated for COVID-19 were occupied. Park Hyang, a senior health ministry official, said rescinding the "anti-epidemic pass" would free more health workers to help monitor nearly 800,000 virus patients with mild or moderate symptoms who have been asked to isolate at home to save hospital space.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-business-health-seoul-south-korea-b8059ddebfb9e3ef29249db32838c805>

Vaccination reduces risk of long-COVID

Post-acute sequelae of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) infection is estimated to affect about 2% of the population in the United Kingdom (UK). These long-term symptoms of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), also called post-acute COVID-19 syndrome, post-COVID-19 syndrome, long COVID, or post-COVID condition, cause functional impairment in the majority of those affected. COVID-19 vaccines have been successful in reducing the rate of incidence of long COVID by lowering the rate of occurrence of SARS-CoV-2 infection. However, the risk for these sequelae post-breakthrough infection remains obscure. Until the end of January 2022, nearly 16% of the UK population were not fully vaccinated despite being eligible for the second vaccination dose. In addition, most ethnic minorities and deprived communities show lower vaccination coverage; these groups also record the highest infection rates.

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20220227/Vaccination-reduces-risk-of-long-COVID.aspx>

Moderna faces new lawsuit over lucrative coronavirus vaccine

Moderna faces yet another patent challenge over its coronavirus vaccine after Arbutus Biopharma and Genevant Sciences, both small biotechnology companies, filed a lawsuit on Monday alleging Moderna hijacked its technology to develop the multibillion-dollar vaccine. Arbutus and Genevant said in their lawsuit that Moderna infringed on their patent for so-called lipid nanoparticle technology, which they say was key in the development of Moderna's mRNA vaccine and took scientists from Arbutus and Genevant "years of painstaking work to develop and refine." The suit had been expected after Moderna lost a U.S. Court of Appeals ruling last year in the protracted patent battle. Moderna, a 10-year-old Cambridge-based biotechnology firm that had not marketed any product before the pandemic, has said it expects coronavirus vaccine sales to top \$19 billion in 2022. Arbutus and Genevant — a company spearheaded by former Arbutus scientists — could demand some of that as royalties if their challenge succeeds.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/02/28/moderna-arbutus-patent-infringement-lawsuit/>

Will we get a single, variant-proof vaccine for Covid?

This week the government announced additional vaccine booster jabs for the over-75s and suggested a further shot is likely to be needed in the autumn. But imagine if the next Covid vaccine jab you have were the last you would ever need. That's a dream being actively pursued now by researchers, who feel it could be possible to make a "universal" vaccine against the Sars-CoV-2 virus that would work well not only against all existing variants but any that the virus could plausibly mutate into in the future. Some are thinking even bigger. In January, Joe Biden's chief medical adviser, Anthony Fauci, and two other experts called for more research into "universal coronavirus vaccines" that would work not only against Sars-CoV-2 but against the many other coronaviruses in animal populations that have the potential to spill over into humans and cause future pandemics. "We need a research approach that can characterise the global 'coronaviral universe' in multiple species," Fauci and colleagues wrote in the New England Journal of Medicine, "and apply this information in developing broadly protective 'universal' vaccines against all [coronaviruses]."

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/feb/26/will-we-get-a-single-variant-proof-vaccine-for-covid>

COVID-19 Proteases Inhibited by Repurposed FDA-Approved Drugs

Two notorious SARS-CoV-2 proteases—Mpro and PLpro—were inhibited by drugs that have already been approved for indications other than COVID-19. The identification of potentially useful SARS-CoV-2 antiviral drugs is obviously welcome, but in this case, the findings are especially encouraging. Why? Because the discovery of the inhibitors was accomplished with a novel screening strategy, one that could be used in additional screening studies. Details about the protease inhibitors—and the screening strategy—appeared in Communications Biology, in an article titled, "Identification of SARS-CoV-2 inhibitors targeting Mpro and PLpro using in-cell protease assay." The in-cell protease assay (ICP) indicated in the article's title is just one part of the screening strategy. Other parts

include antiviral and biochemical activity assessments, as well as structural determinations for rapid identification of protease inhibitors with low cytotoxicity.

<https://www.genengnews.com/topics/drug-discovery/covid-19-proteases-inhibited-by-repurposed-fda-approved-drugs/>

Covid-19: Is the government dismantling pandemic systems too hastily?

A last minute row over funding for free covid testing between the Treasury and the Department of Health and Social Care for England nearly derailed the government's "living with covid" strategy launch last week.¹ But the Cabinet eventually signed off drastic cuts to the estimated £15.7bn (€18.7bn; \$21bn) testing budget as a key plank of the prime minister's plan to scrap all remaining covid regulations in England. Duncan Robertson, a policy and strategy analytics academic at Loughborough University, told The BMJ that the latest row over ending restrictions showed that the "false equivalence of the virus versus the economy" was still rearing its head almost two years into the pandemic, even though it is known that "once people are infected, they can't go to work, and the economy suffers." It remains to be seen whether the right balance has now been struck and whether the short term gains to the exchequer from letting the public shoulder more responsibility for fighting SARS-CoV-2 are going to pay off, with long term benefits to health and society as a whole.

<https://www.bmj.com/content/376/bmj.o515>

Covid-19 news: Omicron immune response protects against BA.2 variant

Data suggests that people who've had the BA.1 omicron variant are protected against BA.2, at least in the short term. A preliminary study of coronavirus infection rates suggests that people who have recently been infected by the BA.1 omicron variant are 95 per cent protected against infection with the fast-spreading BA.2 omicron variant. The omicron wave, which began in November, has primarily been driven by the BA.1 variant, but now another variant of omicron, BA.2, seems to be rising to dominance. BA.2 has 32 of the same mutations as BA.1 but it also has 28 that are different. Rapidly rising numbers of BA.2 infections suggest that this variant is even more transmissible than the BA.1 omicron variant. A key problem with the omicron variants is their ability to escape immunity, but data from around 20,000 people in Qatar suggests that people who have recently been infected with BA.1 are 95 per cent protected against catching BA.2 35 to 50 days after infection.

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2237475-covid-19-news-omicron-immune-response-protects-against-ba-2-variant/>

China perseveres with mRNA COVID shot development amid Omicron, commercial uncertainty

China has spent over a year developing Pfizer-type COVID-19 vaccines that may even help it pivot from stringent "zero-COVID" restrictions, but a changed market and the Omicron variant have muddied prospects before efficacy data has even been published. Still, China is unlikely to join the majority of countries in approving foreign-made vaccines based on messenger RNA (mRNA) technology before making its own, experts said, though a slowing vaccination drive at home and in some other nations and improved supply of approved vaccines have raised questions of viability.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/china-perseveres-with-mrna-covid-shot-development-amid-omicron-commercial-2022-02-28/>

After raking in billions with its COVID shot, Moderna faces patent infringement suit related to vaccine delivery tech

Last last year, Moderna lost a legal bid to invalidate two Arbutus Biopharma patents tied to the delivery of its COVID-19 vaccine. At the time, it wasn't so much a question of whether Arbutus would sue the messenger RNA vaccine giant for infringement, but when. Now, the other shoe has dropped. Arbutus and Roivant's Genevant Sciences on Monday filed (PDF) a lawsuit against Moderna in the U.S. District Court for the District of Delaware. In their suit, the companies seek damages for

infringement on six patents they claim Moderna infringed with the production and sale of its COVID-19 vaccine. The patents relate to nucleic acid-lipid particles and lipid vesicles, plus compositions and methods for their use, Arbutus and Genevant said in a release. Crucially, the plaintiff companies don't want to stop Moderna from making, selling or distributing its shot.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/moderna-headed-to-court-after-arbutus-genevant-call-infringement-patents-related-to-covid-19>

CDC eases COVID-19 mask guidance, adds metrics for future use

As expected and amid a steadily declining Omicron surge, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) today updated its indoor masking guidance, which would ease indoor use for most parts of the country, according to new baseline measures. The CDC urges states and cities to still look at COVID-19 caseloads when considering masking. But it adds two new metrics for assessing whether to trigger the measure: hospitalization levels and hospital capacity. Most states have already dropped their mask mandates, reflecting a transition to voluntary use in people who want to lower their risk of spreading or contracting the virus. Hawaii is the only state with mandates still in place.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/02/cdc-eases-covid-19-mask-guidance-adds-metrics-future-use>

Studies: No to very slight risk of hearing loss after COVID vaccine

A team led by Johns Hopkins University researchers investigated 555 cases of sudden sensorineural hearing loss (SSNHL) among adults within 3 weeks of COVID-19 vaccination reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System (VAERS) during the first 7 months of the US COVID vaccine rollout (Dec 14, 2020, to Jul 16, 2021). The patients had received the Pfizer, Moderna, or Johnson & Johnson (J&J) COVID-19 vaccine. The study period spanned the administration of nearly 187 million vaccine doses in the United States. In addition to the cross-sectional study, the authors also analyzed a multicenter, retrospective case series of 21 patients at two hospitals and one community practice who experienced SSNHL after COVID-19 vaccination. SSNHL is unexplained hearing loss occurring all at once or gradually over a few days. The researchers noted that anecdotal reports of post-COVID vaccination have recently emerged among otolaryngologists and the public.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2022/02/studies-no-very-slight-risk-hearing-loss-after-covid-vaccine>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Woman dies while Covid-19 positive as 40 new cases are reported

A 76-year-old woman is the latest victim of the Covid-19 pandemic, as 40 new cases of the virus were reported on Monday by health authorities. 61 people meanwhile have recovered from the virus, meaning that the number of active cases is now down to 692. 36 patients are currently being treated at Mater Dei Hospital, with three of those in intensive care. 1,242,239 doses of the vaccine have been administered thus far, with 342,764 of those being booster doses. Malta has had 71,208 cases of Covid-19. 69,500 of those have recovered, while 605 have died.

<https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2022-02-28/local-news/Woman-dies-while-Covid-19-positive-as-40-new-cases-are-reported-6736241036>

Vietnam reports a new daily record of 94,385 new Covid-19 cases, total tally now tops 3.4 million on Monday (Feb 28)

Vietnam logged a new daily record of 94,385 Covid-19 infections on Monday, taking the total to over 3.4 million cases, according to its Ministry of Health. The new infections, up 7,395 cases from Sunday, logged in 61 localities nationwide, included 94,376 domestically transmitted and nine imported. Vietnamese capital Hanoi remained the epidemic hotspot with 12,850 cases on Monday, also its highest ever daily number, followed by northern Quang Ninh province with 9,105 cases, and central Nghe An province with 3,958 cases. On the same day, health authorities documented 28,095

Covid-19 cases detected earlier in northern Quang Ninh province.

<https://www.thestar.com.my/aseanplus/aseanplus-news/2022/02/28/vietnam-reports-a-new-daily-record-of-94385-new-covid-19-cases-total-tally-now-tops-34-million-on-monday-feb-28>

Hong Kong domestic helpers abandoned as COVID takes toll

A rapid spread in COVID-19 cases in Hong Kong has cast a spotlight on the plight of domestic helpers in the global financial hub after some were fired or made homeless by their employers when they tested positive for coronavirus. Hong Kong has around 340,000 domestic helpers, most hailing from either the Philippines or Indonesia. Many families in the city depend on live-in helpers for housekeeping and to look after the elderly and children, with the minimum wage set at HK\$4,630 (\$593) per month. Under Hong Kong law, migrant domestic workers must live with their employers, often residing in tiny rooms or sharing the bedrooms of the children they care for.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/hong-kong-domestic-helpers-abandoned-covid-takes-toll-2022-02-28/>

Hong Kong mortuaries hit capacity as COVID deaths climb

Facilities for storing dead bodies at hospitals and public mortuaries in Hong Kong are at maximum capacity due to a record number of COVID-19 fatalities, the Hospital Authority said on Monday, as officials battle to control a surge in cases. The global financial hub reported a daily record high of 34,466 new coronavirus infections and 87 deaths on Monday, health authorities said. Separately, the city's Education Secretary said international schools could maintain their original term dates, after widespread confusion over summer school holidays.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/hong-kong-mortuaries-fill-up-covid-deaths-climb-2022-02-28/>

New Lockdown

Virus-hit Hong Kong considering lockdown

Hong Kong may impose a China-style hard lockdown that confines people to their homes, authorities signalled Monday, with the city's zero-Covid strategy in tatters and bodies piling up in hospitals. Two years of strict zero-Covid policies kept the coronavirus largely bay but a breakthrough of the highly transmissible Omicron variant exposed how little authorities had done to prepare for a mass outbreak. Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam previously ruled out a citywide lockdown and instead has ordered all 7.4 million residents to be tested in March.

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