

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

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Overnight NewsRoundUp

First counterfeit Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines surface in Poland and Mexico

- Pfizer discovered the first counterfeits of its COVID-19 vaccines - the latest fakes amid the worldwide push for vaccinations. [The vials, recovered were recovered in Mexico and Poland.](#)
- In Poland, these vials contained water and anti-wrinkle treatments, [the pharma told The Wall Street Journal. At a clinic in Mexico, where 80 people paid \\$1,000 per dose, vials were seized with fraudulent Pfizer labels, with incorrect expiration dates and lot numbers.](#) The fake vaccines were actually distilled water and delivered in beach-style coolers. Recipients were unharmed.
- The Pfizer fakes are the latest in worldwide discoveries of counterfeit COVID-19 vaccine and deceptive websites hawking non-existent vaccines. Last month vials were seized in South Africa and Mexico.
- The South African haul included 2,400 doses and resulted in the arrest of three Chinese nationals and a Zambian. An investigation went on to reveal a network also selling fake vaccines in China, where an additional 80 were arrested.
- In Mexico, a private plane headed to Honduras was seized with 5,700 doses of supposedly Sputnik V vaccines from Russia, when it was seized. 'This is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to COVID-19 vaccine related crime,' Interpol Secretary General Juergen Stock told Reuters.
- In the USA and several other countries, fake websites are purporting to sell COVID-19 vaccines with the purpose of obtaining people's personal information. The U.S. department of Homeland Security told the WSJ that it took down 30 websites and captured 74 web domains seeking to take advantage of the demand for COVID-19 related products.
- Scammers are also using telemarketing calls, text messages and door-to-door visits to access personal information, according to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).
- In February, three men from Baltimore were charged with conspiracy to commit wire fraud and faced up to 20 years in prison for running a scam website to sell Moderna COVID-19 vaccines for \$30 each. Their site was designed to appear like Moderna's right down to its logo, markings and text. The scammers also used the web address ModernaTX.shop - closely mimicking the company's actual URL, modernatx.com. HHS said it has yet to uncover counterfeit vaccines in the USA. Its pursuit of fake drugs is long established as the industry generates more than \$200bn annually.

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<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/counterfeit-versions-pfizer-covid-19-vaccine-found-poland-mexico>

Pfizer Identifies Fake Covid-19 Shots Abroad as Criminals Exploit Vaccine Demand

Pfizer says it has identified in Mexico and Poland the first confirmed instances of counterfeit versions of the Covid-19 vaccine it developed with BioNTech SE, the latest attempt by criminals trying to exploit the world-wide vaccination campaign. Vials seized by authorities in separate investigations were tested by the company and confirmed to contain bogus vaccine. The vials recovered in Mexico also had fraudulent labeling, while a substance inside vials in Poland was likely an antiwrinkle treatment, Pfizer said. About 80 people at a clinic in Mexico received a fake vaccine going for about \$1,000 a dose, though they don't appear to have been physically harmed. The vials, found in beach-style beer coolers, had different lot numbers than those sent to the state, and a wrong expiration date, said Dr. Manuel de la O Cavazos, the health secretary of Nuevo León state.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/pfizer-identifies-fake-covid-19-shots-abroad-as-criminals-exploit-vaccine-demand-11619006403>

The Indian COVID Crisis

Twitter becomes platform of hope amid the despair of India's COVID crisis

After spending hours fruitlessly calling government helplines in a search for a hospital bed for a critically ill COVID-19 patient, Indian lawyer Jeevika Shiv posted an SOS request on Twitter. "Serious #covid19 patient in #Delhi with oxygen level 62 needs immediate hospital bed," Shiv, part of a 350-member COVID-19 volunteer Medical Support Group, said on Twitter late last week. Help came quickly. The patient found a bed and was soon showing signs of recovery. "Finally, it was help online that worked as people responded with information," Shiv said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/twitter-becomes-platform-hope-amid-despair-indias-covid-crisis-2021-04-21/>

For India's poor, lockdown policing adds to pandemic hardships

Hawkers, slum dwellers, food couriers and migrant workers bear brunt of pandemic policing as the country struggles to contain a deadly second wave.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/21/for-indias-poor-lockdown-policing-adds-to-pandemic-hardships>

Indian COVID-19 patients die as ventilators run out of oxygen; infections surge

At least 24 COVID-19 patients in western India died on Wednesday when the oxygen supply to their ventilators ran out, amid a nationwide shortage of the gas and a surge in infections. Maharashtra State Health Minister Rajesh Tope confirmed the deaths at a hospital in Nashik city and said the hospital's oxygen supply ran out because a tanker refilling it suffered a leak. Oxygen was running scarce throughout the country. "The leakage was spotted at the tank supplying oxygen for these patients. The interrupted supply could be linked to the deaths of the patients in the hospital," Tope said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/oxygen-supplies-run-low-india-grapples-with-coronavirus-storm-2021-04-21/>

Indian capital running out of medical oxygen as pandemic surges

Authorities said hospitals in the Indian capital of Delhi would start running out of medical oxygen by Wednesday as Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the country faced a coronavirus "storm" overwhelming its health system. Major government hospitals in the city of 20 million people had between eight and 24 hours' worth of oxygen while some private ones had enough for just four to five hours, said Delhi's deputy chief minister, Manish Sisodia. "If we don't get enough supplies by tomorrow morning, it will be a disaster," he said, calling for urgent help from the federal government.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/india-reports-daily-rise-covid-19-cases-259170-2021-04-20/>

India PM Modi urges state governments to use lockdown as last resort to contain virus

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged state governments on Tuesday to use lockdowns as the last resort to contain the spread of the second wave of COVID-19 infections, even as cases and

deaths surge to record highs. Modi also asked citizens to stay indoors, not spread panic about the virus and form local groups to ensure adherence to COVID-19 protocols. He said the central government is working with states and private companies to ramp up the supply of oxygen, as well as production and distribution of vaccines.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/healthcoronavirus-india-modi/india-pm-modi-urges-state-governments-to-use-lockdown-as-last-resort-to-contain-virus-idUSL4N2MD3RF>

India's Serum Institute to raise output to 100 mln AstraZeneca doses by July, not end-May

The Serum Institute of India will be able to raise its monthly output of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine to 100 million doses by July from 60-70 million now, later than a previous timeline of end-May, its chief executive Adar Poonawalla told CNBC-TV18.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/indias-serum-institute-raise-output-100-mln-astrazeneca-doses-by-july-not-end-2021-04-21/>

Madhya Pradesh announces free COVID-19 vaccine for all adults

The Madhya Pradesh government on Wednesday announced that all people above the age of 18 years will be offered COVID-19 vaccine free of cost in the state from May 1. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan made the announcement in Bhopal. The chief minister said if COVID-19 is to be curbed, then the chain of its infection must be broken and for this, people need to stay indoors and avoid unnecessary travel.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/madhya-pradesh-announces-free-covid-19-vaccine-for-all-adults/articleshow/82181539.cms>

India reports more than 2,000 COVID-19 deaths in single day

India reported more than 2,000 deaths from COVID-19 over the last 24 hours, the highest single-day tally for the country so far, health ministry data showed on Wednesday. Coronavirus infections also rose by a record, increasing by 295,041 over the last 24 hours, the data showed. Total deaths reached 182,553. India's overall case tally is now at 15.6 million, second only to the United States, which has over 31 million infections.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/india-reports-more-than-2000-covid-19-deaths-single-day-2021-04-21/>

Oxygen supply disruption kills 22 COVID-19 patients in India

Twenty-two COVID-19 patients on ventilators died in a hospital in western India on Wednesday when their oxygen supply was interrupted by a leak in a supply line, officials said. Suraj Mandhar, the district collector, said the supply of oxygen has since resumed to other patients. Fire officer Sanjay Bairagi said the leak was halted by the fire service within 15 minutes, but there was supply disruption in the Zakir Hussain Hospital in Nashik, a city in Maharashtra state that is the worst hit by the latest surge in coronavirus cases in the country.

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/disruption-oxygen-supply-kills-22-indian-hospital-77210246>

India's Covaxin shot 78% effective against coronavirus, say developers

India's only domestically developed COVID-19 vaccine, Covaxin, has been found to be 78% effective in a second analysis of clinical trials done around the country, its makers said on Wednesday. "I am very pleased to state that Covaxin ... has shown the efficacy of 78% in the second interim analysis," said Balram Bhargava, the chief of the state-run Indian Council of Medical Research that has created the vaccine with Bharat Biotech. The first analysis released in March had shown an efficacy rate of 81%.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/indias-covaxin-shot-78-effective-against-coronavirus-say-developers-2021-04-21/>

France to impose entry restrictions on travelers from India

A government official says France is about to impose new entry restrictions on travelers from India, in order to fight a contagious coronavirus variant spreading in that country

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/france-impose-entry-restrictions-travelers-india-77216124>

'Indian' variant of Covid-19 detected in Manchester

Three cases of the new Indian variant of coronavirus have been found in Manchester, the city's public health director has confirmed. It is not yet clear where in Manchester they have been identified, but they are all said to be linked to a recent trip to India. Some cases have also been found in Lancashire. David Regan, Manchester's public health director, said the people affected have been following the correct quarantine rules and their contacts have been traced and notified. The new variant was identified in Maharashtra region of India at the start of March and has been of interest to public health officials here due to its sustained spread internationally, as well as the mutations it features.

<https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/indian-variant-covid-19-detected-20430063>

Vaccine patent gives US government 'leverage' over manufacturers

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The US government can use its ownership of a crucial vaccine patent to push companies to share their expertise with other manufacturers and boost global access to coronavirus jabs, according to a top scientific official. Barney Graham, one of the US National Institutes of Health scientists who invented a key piece of technology used in the Moderna and BioNTech/Pfizer jabs, told the Financial Times the government's patent gave Washington "leverage" over manufacturers. "Virtually everything that comes out of the government's research labs is a non-exclusive licensing agreement so that it doesn't get blocked by any particular company," said Graham, who plans to retire from the US government this year. "That's one of the reasons [I joined the NIH]: it's to be able to use the leverage of the public funding to solve public health issues."

<https://www.ft.com/content/d0c70cc2-0ffa-42dd-b0d0-0f76eeb273f0>

MSF urges rich countries to back COVID vaccine patent waiver

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International medical charity Doctors Without Borders (Medecins Sans Frontieres, or MSF) has urged rich countries to stop blocking a patent waiver plan that could boost the global production of coronavirus vaccines. Members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) will meet virtually for informal talks on Thursday to discuss a proposal to waive intellectual property rights for producing COVID-19 vaccines and other coronavirus-related medical tools for the duration of the pandemic. Sponsors of the waiver argue that the temporary suspension would allow more factories worldwide to produce jabs without breaking international rules under the WTO agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). But the proposal, originally submitted in October by India and South Africa, has met staunch opposition from several high-income members, many of which are home to major drug-makers - such as the United States and members of the European Union.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/21/wto-to-hold-meeting-on-waving-property-rights-on-covid-vaccines>

Latin American leaders seek more vaccines at Andorra summit

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With eyes set on expanding access to coronavirus vaccines and economic recovery, representatives of 22 countries from Latin America and Europe's Iberian Peninsula are meeting — mostly virtually — in the tiny mountainous nation of Andorra for the first time since the pandemic started. Latin America has suffered from the pandemic in a disproportionate way: its 640 million inhabitants are

about 8% of the world's population, but the region accounts for nearly 30% of confirmed global COVID-19 deaths. The Iberoamerican Summit, which normally takes place every two years, wants to address that, with a final summit declaration expected to include a renewed call for universal and equitable access to vaccines.

<https://apnews.com/article/latin-america-health-business-andorra-summits-8af73ef2fddb9c06e8b067115214eb59>

Healthcare Services At Full Stretch

Some Illinois hospitals running out of beds due to COVID-19

Several hospitals in northwest and central Illinois are running out of beds because of the coronavirus pandemic, officials say. About a half dozen hospitals operated by OSF HealthCare had 90% of their beds or more filled Tuesday, chief operating officer Dr. Michael Cruz told the Chicago Tribune. OSF's St. Francis Medical Center in Peoria was at 97% occupancy, its St. Anthony Medical Center in Rockford was at 96% and its St. Joseph Medical Center in Bloomington had no available intensive care unit beds, Cruz said. OSF has been transferring patients to other hospitals and moving staff as needed, Cruz said. It's also having some patients stay in emergency room beds until ICU spots become available.

<https://apnews.com/article/health-illinois-coronavirus-39b3fce912c15215b006bda7dabfb9d9>

Michigan was warned about the British COVID-19 variant, but many ignored it

Local health departments across Michigan started sounding the alarm months ago. A deadlier coronavirus variant that had first ravaged Britain was now here — in metro Detroit, at the University of Michigan, a state prison in Ionia and rural counties in the Thumb region — with doctors, nurses and public health officials fully aware. And yet Michiganders — from state prison employees to small business owners and local officials to parents of high school athletes — ignored medical experts' repeated warnings about the highly infectious variant. They rebuffed stay-in-place recommendations, allowed crowded events to occur and turned a blind eye to defiant behavior, according to thousands of internal health department emails and contact tracing notes from across the state and interviews with those in charge.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/michigan-was-warned-about-the-british-covid-19-variant-but-many-ignored-it/ar-BB1fRyqq>

Lao capital enters 14-day lockdown amid COVID-19 cases surge

Lao Prime Minister Phankham Viphavanh on Wednesday has ordered a 14-day lockdown for the capital of Vientiane in the wake of a surge of COVID-19 cases, while other provinces are urged to consider intensifying prevention measures. The Lao Ministry of Health on Wednesday announced 26 new cases of COVID-19 in Vientiane, following an outbreak believed to have begun during the Lao New Year holiday period. According to a notice published by the PM on Wednesday, which will be effective from Thursday to May 5, Lao authorities at every level must continue educating the public about the dangers posed by COVID-19, as well as ways to protect themselves and their families. People working at government offices in Vientiane are to reduce the number of workers to ensure social distancing, except for essential personnel such as soldiers and police officers. The same applies to private sector businesses.

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/asiapacific/2021-04/21/c_139896686.htm

'No one was listening': Long Covid patients struggle to get care for their symptoms

Thousands of people with long Covid have struggled to receive medical care for their symptoms. Many have found that even if they're able to see a doctor, it can be difficult to be heard, and the best treatments remain unclear. Medical centers across the country are opening clinics specifically for people with lingering Covid symptoms, aiming to harness the expertise of specialists ranging from pulmonologists to physical therapists to neurologists. But many long Covid sufferers are located far from such a clinic, and the waitlist to be seen often is long. For example, the Cleveland

Clinic's post-Covid recovery center, reCOVER clinic, welcomed 113 patients in its first month, and as of mid-March, the clinic's next available appointments were at the end of July. Penn Medicine's Post-Covid Assessment and Recovery Clinic in Philadelphia has enrolled 458, with a three-month waitlist for new patients.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/04/21/long-covid-patients-struggle-to-get-care-for-their-symptoms/>

Virginia's emergency alert on coronavirus vaccine availability startles some

Virginia officials startled some residents Monday by using the wireless emergency alert system to send out notice that coronavirus vaccines are now available to everyone over age 16. The buzzing cellphone messages led some residents to fear the worst. Complaints on Twitter ranged from "terrified there was an active shooter in my area" to "I thought it was time for a tornado" to "I thought Nukes were incoming or something" to "Thank you Commonwealth of Virginia for waking me up from my nap." Alena Yarmosky, a spokeswoman for Gov. Ralph Northam (D), said her office had seen some criticism but felt that the response was generally positive

https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/coronavirus-dc-virginia-maryland/2021/04/20/6937167e-a204-11eb-a7ee-949c574a09ac_story.html

The Challenge for African Healthcare

Cash-strapped Africa overwhelmed by COVID vaccine challenge

French domestic travel restrictions, set up to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus, will end on May 3, said a government source, as President Emmanuel Macron's administration eyes a gradual exit from the latest lockdown. Macron announced France's third, national lockdown at the end of March, and the government has said it could re-open some businesses and leisure activities - such as outdoor seatings at bars and restaurants - by mid-May.

https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/cash-strapped-africa-overwhelmed-by-covid-vaccine-challenge-2021-04-21/?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=Social

COVAX Obstacles and Shortages Threaten Africa's Coronavirus Vaccine Rollout

Africa has lagged behind in the race to acquire coronavirus vaccines since it began. It was clear individual governments would not be able to compete against wealthier nations purchasing limited stocks, so a collective effort quickly got underway. When the first doses arrived in Ghana, the Ivory Coast, Kenya, and Rwanda in late February and early March, it seemed like the continent's rollout had finally gotten off the ground. However, efforts are stumbling in the face of systemic obstacles to distribution. Now, India's surging third wave could also directly affect the continent's access to vaccines. Africa has gotten most of its vaccine doses through the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) initiative, backed by the World Health Organization, the European Commission, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, which pools donor funding to allow developing countries to acquire shots—primarily AstraZeneca, which doesn't require below-freezing storage. COVAX now needs an additional \$2 billion to continue its work.

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/04/21/covax-africa-vaccine-rollout-coronavirus-pandemic/>

Thailand seeks more COVID shots amid record surge in cases

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Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha has announced plans to secure 35 million more doses of COVID-19 vaccines this year, on top of existing orders of nearly 65 million doses, as the country deals with a record surge in infections. Health authorities on Wednesday announced 1,458 new coronavirus cases, and two more deaths, a figure lower than Sunday's record high of 1,767 infections. The latest figures take Thailand's total to 46,643 cases and 110 deaths. A third of the total infections have come this month alone.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/21/thailand-braces-for-third-covid-wave-eyes-more-vaccine-doses>

Studies, Trials and Investigations

Moderna COVID vaccine could receive emergency authorization for children ages 12 to 15 within 'weeks'

After months of clinical trials examining how Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine affects children 12 to 15 years old, Dr. Robert Finberg of UMass Medical School in Worcester anticipates emergency authorization for the population within weeks. UMass Medical School researchers began enrolling adolescents ages 12 through 17 in February. The trials were expected to enroll 3,000 adolescents at up to 15 sites nationwide. They are now fully enrolled and researchers are waiting for the data to return. "So far the clinical trials have been very successful," Finberg said. "I think we're confident that they will continue to be. These vaccines look like they are very safe and very efficacious."

<https://www.masslive.com/coronavirus/2021/04/moderna-covid-vaccine-could-receive-emergency-authorization-for-children-ages-12-to-15-within-weeks.html>

Link between cardiac arrests and COVID may help map the pandemic

A new study, published this month, collected data from 50 US cities as well as from major cities in the United Kingdom, France, Italy, New Zealand and Australia. The study showed that rises in out-of-hospital cardiac arrests were linked to rising COVID cases. The study was based on data provided by the Metropolitan EMS Medical Directors Global Alliance, a surveillance network of emergency medical services (EMS) staff who voluntarily share data. Dr Paul Pepe is global coordinator of the alliance and also a co-author of the study. He told Al Jazeera that normally a 10 percent increase in cardiac arrests would be a cause for concern. But during last spring in the US, two-thirds of US cities in the study saw increases between 20 and 50 percent. In cities particularly hit hard, the rate doubled

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2021/4/21/is-a-spike-in-cardiac-arrests-related-to-covid-19>

Blood Clotting Risk Higher for COVID-19, Than From Vaccines

Researchers at the University of Oxford in England reported that the risk of the rare blood clotting known as cerebral venous thrombosis (CVT) following COVID-19 infection is around 100 times greater than normal. And several times higher than it is post-vaccination or following influenza. The study authors, led by Professor Paul Harrison and Dr. Maxime Taquet, counted the number of CVT cases diagnosed in the two weeks following diagnosis of COVID-19 or after the first dose of a vaccine. They then compared these to calculated incidences of CVT following influenza infection and the background level in the general population. These researchers report that CVT is more common after COVID-19 than in any comparison groups, with 30% of these cases occurring in the under 40 population.

<https://www.precisionvaccinations.com/2021/04/20/blood-clotting-risk-higher-covid-19-vaccines>

First study into prevalence of COVID-19 symptoms amongst high-risk children

Children with weakened immune systems have not shown a higher risk of developing severe COVID-19 infection despite commonly displaying symptoms, a new study suggests. During a 16-week period which covered the first wave of the pandemic, researchers from the University of Southampton and University Hospital Southampton carried out an observational study of nearly 1500 immunocompromised children - defined as requiring annual influenza vaccinations due to underlying conditions or medication. The results, published in BMJ Open, showed that symptoms of COVID-19 infection were common in many of the children - with over two thirds of participants reporting at least one symptom and one third experiencing three or more symptoms simultaneously. One hundred and ten patients with symptoms undertook viral PCR tests, none of whom tested positive.

<https://www.miragenews.com/first-study-into-prevalence-of-covid-19-546491/>

Oral drug Molnupiravir effective against COVID-19 in hamsters: study

An orally administered antiviral drug initially developed to treat influenza can significantly decrease novel coronavirus levels in hamsters, holding out promise of a pill to combat COVID-19, say researchers. Scientists from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the U.S. and the University of Plymouth in the U.K. found that MK-4482, also called Molnupiravir, was effective when provided up to 12 hours before or 12 hours after infection with SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19. The drug can also decrease damage it causes to lungs, states the study conducted on hamsters.

<https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/oral-drug-molnupiravir-effective-against-covid-19-in-hamsters-study/article34365900.ece>

Racial minorities at higher risk for COVID-19 hospitalization, ICU care

Racial minority COVID-19 patients are at much higher risk for needing hospitalization and intensive care than their White counterparts, a new Kaiser Permanente Southern California (KPSC) study finds. The retrospective study, published yesterday in the Annals of Internal Medicine, involved comparing the electronic health records of 47,974 adult Hispanic, Black, Asian, Pacific Islander, and White COVID-19 patients from Mar 1 to Jul 31, 2020. The researchers saw disparities by race for all outcomes, even after adjustment for age, sex, underlying medical conditions, and body mass index (BMI). Racial minorities had a slightly higher chance than White patients of being tested for or diagnosed as having COVID-19 but were also at substantially higher risk for hospitalization and ICU care

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/04/racial-minorities-higher-risk-covid-19-hospitalization-icu-care>

Roche looking for new place to test COVID-19 pill after cases plummet in UK

Roche (ROG.S) is looking for another location to carry out trials of its pill to fight COVID-19, after plummeting case numbers in Britain made it difficult to find enough patients for its study there, the Swiss drugmaker said on Wednesday. Roche and Boston-based partner Atea Pharmaceuticals (AVIR.O) are hoping their AT-527 pill could offer an anti-viral therapy to treat COVID-19 patients that would be easier to administer and cheaper than other prospective treatments, such as antibody cocktails or Gilead Science's (GILD.O) remdesivir. In an interview in Swiss media in early March, Roche Chairman Christoph Franz had offered the tantalizing prospect of data on AT-527 "within the next weeks", saying he dreamed of being able to fight the pandemic with a pill by year's end.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/roche-trial-covid-19-pill-delayed-uk-vaccine-rollout-intervened-2021-04-21/>

COVID-19: Regular exercise may cut COVID-19 death risk by a third, major study finds

Regular exercise reduces the chances of dying from infectious diseases such as COVID-19 by more than a third and makes people 31% less likely to catch the virus, a major study has found. The world's first study into the link between exercise and COVID-19 immunity suggested people need to be doing 30 minutes a day, five days a week, or 150 minutes a week of exercise that gets them at least slightly out of breath. Recommended activities include walking, running, cycling and strengthening exercises.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-regular-exercise-may-cut-covid-19-death-risk-by-a-third-major-study-finds-12281648>

Manufacturing and Production Updates

How South Korea turbocharged specialty syringe production for COVID-19 vaccines

Under fire in local media for not doing enough to secure COVID-19 vaccines, South Korea's government had been reviewing options to accelerate shipments and gain more supply. Engineering a jump in LDS syringe output was an opportunity to be seized, it concluded. The niche products were suddenly in huge demand globally after it became apparent they could be used to squeeze out a sixth dose from vials of Pfizer Inc (PFE.N) and BioNTech's (22UAY.DE) newly approved COVID-19

vaccine compared to five doses with a standard syringe. "It had come to our attention that Pfizer was looking for LDS syringes...using LDS syringes automatically boosts vaccine volume by 20%," Park told Reuters.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/how-south-korea-turbocharged-specialty-syringe-production-covid-19-vaccines-2021-04-21/>

Syria's Idlib region to receive first batch of COVID-19 vaccines

A first batch of COVID-19 vaccine doses was expected to arrive on Wednesday in war-torn northwestern Syria, where millions of people live in dire humanitarian conditions, a United Nations official said. The 53,800 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine were dispatched to the rebel-dominated region as part of the Covax facility, which ensures the world's poorest economies get access to jabs for free. The delivery will be the first to Syria as part of the Covax programme, which has already sent vaccine doses to more than 100 different territories worldwide.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/21/syrias-idlib-region-to-receive-first-batch-of-covid-19-vaccines>

Pfizer and Moderna vaccines could be produced in Melbourne as government announces \$50m funding

Coronavirus vaccines like Pfizer and Moderna could be produced in Australia for the first time as the Victorian Government invests \$50 million into the domestic manufacturing of mRNA vaccine technology. The state government will work closely with the Commonwealth and world-leading experts to develop the first mRNA manufacturing facility in the Southern Hemisphere, which would be based in Melbourne. In a statement, the government said mRNA vaccines, such as Pfizer and Moderna, were a "promising alternative" to traditional vaccines because of their high efficacy, capacity for rapid development, low-cost manufacture and safe administration.

<https://www.9news.com.au/national/coronavirus-vaccine-australia-pfizer-moderna-could-be-produced-in-melbourne/181532cf-aae0-46d1-a587-059c93fcc479>

EU countries ready to start using J&J shot as deliveries resume

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European countries prepared on Wednesday to start using Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine and speed up their vaccination campaigns after Europe's drug regulator backed the shot and deliveries started trickling in after a week-long pause. Germany's health ministry said it would start deliveries to federal states for use in vaccination centres shortly, and that family doctors should resume the use of the vaccine as of Wednesday, while France will receive the vaccine from week after next. The Netherlands planned to start using it next week.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/germany-distribute-jj-covid-vaccine-federal-states-2021-04-21/>

Pregnant women may get Covid-19 vaccine priority to prevent complications

Pregnant women may get Covid-19 vaccine priority to prevent complications

Experts are considering whether pregnant women should be prioritised for Covid-19 vaccines to avoid complications before they give birth. Three pregnant women were treated in intensive care in recent weeks after becoming unwell with the virus. Karina Butler, chairwoman of the National Immunisation Advisory Committee (Niac), said yesterday: "It's not so much that they require a specific prioritisation as such, but if pregnancy is time limited it may be a thing that they may need to be facilitated in some way." She said that vaccinating women before they gave birth was "under active review at the moment" and that a recommendation would be coming shortly.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/pregnant-women-may-get-covid-19-vaccine-priority-to-prevent-complications-ftmcw0qc>

Social Media Influencers Are Spreading Wild Rumors About COVID-19 Vaccines and Periods

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A few media outlets have written about vaccines and menstruation—back in February, it was in the news in Israel, where the vaccine rollout is further along. In the United States, there has been a flurry of coverage over the last few weeks, first in smaller outlets like The Lily and a few days ago in the New York Times. A few weeks ago, Dr. Kathryn Clancy, a professor of anthropology at the University of Illinois, tweeted about her own post-vaccine menstrual irregularity. She heard from so many people with similar experiences that she and a colleague decided to run a survey to collect data on post-vaccination cycle changes. It has received more than 19,000 responses since it launched in early April. Over the last few days, social media accounts from those opposed to vaccines have begun to promote the outlandish idea that simply being around people who have been vaccinated causes menstrual issues and even miscarriage.

https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2021/04/social-media-influencers-are-spreading-wild-rumors-about-covid-19-vaccines-and-periods/?utm_source=twitter&utm_campaign=naytev&utm_medium=social

German lawmakers approve 'emergency brake' virus rules

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German lawmakers on Wednesday approved a proposal by Chancellor Angela Merkel's government to mandate uniform restrictions in areas where the coronavirus is spreading too quickly, among them closures and a nighttime curfew. As parliament's lower house debated the plan, thousands of protesters gathered on a nearby street. Police broke up the demonstration with pepper spray and made dozens of arrests after participants ignored coronavirus restrictions and tossed bottles at officers. The legislation to apply an "emergency brake" consistently in areas with high infection rates is intended to end the patchwork of measures that has often characterized the pandemic response across highly decentralized Germany's 16 states.

<https://apnews.com/article/health-business-government-and-politics-europe-coronavirus-ce9e12ee389837fdbecb60b950001624>

Covid-19 variants: South African strain is causing the most concern for UK scientists

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The South African Covid-19 variant is causing the most concern for experts tracking the different strains of coronavirus in the UK. Professor Sharon Peacock, the head of the Covid-19 Genomics UK Consortium (COG-UK) which is mapping the spread of new variants, said B1351 was the one she was most worried about because evidence shows it can escape immunity built up from previous infection or vaccination. Ministers have been told that cases of the South African variant have increased by more than 5.5 per cent over the past 10 days after a period of stability

<https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/covid-19-variants-south-african-strain-is-causing-the-most-concern-for-uk-scientists-965679>

COVID-19: Tony Blair says vaccine hesitancy is 'completely wrong and unjustified'

COVID-19: Tony Blair says vaccine hesitancy is 'completely wrong and unjustified'

Tony Blair is calling on Boris Johnson to launch a major publicity blitz to boost COVID vaccine take-up rates and allay fears about side-effects. The former prime minister claims the government should do more to sell the benefits of vaccines and publish data on how effective and safe they are. Mr Blair's call comes in a new report - Restoring Confidence in the Workhorse Covid-19 Vaccines, published by his Institute for Global Change - which examines reasons for rising vaccine hesitancy, particularly relating to AstraZeneca.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-tony-blair-says-vaccine-hesitancy-is-completely-wrong-and-unjustified-12282181>