

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

10th May 2021

Overnight News RoundUp

It is too soon to declare vaccine victory - four strategies for continued progress

- **There is hope** in the United States that the acute phase of the SARS-CoV2 pandemic may soon end. As of President Biden's 100th day in office on April 29, more than 99 million adults in the USA had been fully vaccinated (30% of the entire population) and more than 143 million (43% of the entire population) have had their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine. Fully two-thirds of American adults embrace vaccines and the 'moveable middle' of people delaying a decision has shrunk by more than half to 15%. Black, Latinx and Native American populations have recently moved toward a much higher acceptance of vaccines, though more progress is still needed.
- [In another positive development, social media platforms have made public commitments to remove, inform and reduce misleading vaccine-related content and bring these efforts to scale. At the same time, the U.S. government and its allies have become more aggressive in tracking and countering Russian and Chinese online disinformation campaigns aiming to undermine confidence in Western vaccines.](#)
- Nevertheless, **public confidence and trust - in vaccines, authorities and science - continues to fall significantly short** of what is required to exit the pandemic crisis, at home and abroad. And more is needed to battle disinformation. As the United States has shifted from a scarcity of vaccines to an abundance, we increasingly see a major source of resistance coming from Republican voters and white evangelicals. Over one-third of Republicans and 28% of white evangelicals claim they will not take a vaccine. The number rises to nearly one-half of Republican male voters, with the greatest resistance concentrated among the young and those living in rural settings....

It's too soon to declare vaccine victory — four strategies for continued progress

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Innovation. Vaccines should be delivered along with other health and social services that address the negative economic impacts that have left millions unemployed and unable to afford housing, food and other necessities. Enlisting trusted community leaders will be essential in advancing such efforts. Collaboration between mainstream and digital media platforms and the medical and scientific communities can interrupt the spread of misinformation and increase the availability of accurate and engaging content. Engagement with key social and economic sectors beyond health. More conversations are needed across educational institutions, businesses, healthcare providers, the agricultural sector, and the security, law enforcement, and military communities to engage their respective communities in dialogue about vaccines in the context of post-pandemic recovery. A top line priority needs to be creating hyperlocal strategies to win over skeptical Republicans and evangelicals while continuing fruitful engagement with Black, Latinx and Native American populations. Vaccines could go the way of masks in America, and become highly politicized, if proactive listening and engagement with these groups does not occur. Fortunately, Republican elected leaders and opinion makers are increasingly stepping forward publicly and privately in defense of vaccines. Those initiatives will be bolstered significantly if other trusted local messengers — the family doctor or nurse, community faith leaders and family members — join in also.

<https://thehill.com/opinion/healthcare/552219-its-too-soon-to-declare-covid-vaccine-victory-four-strategies-for>

Stopping Drug Patents Has Stopped Pandemics Before

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Consider what happened in the years after 1996, when a consortium of pharmaceutical companies took the unprecedented step of sharing their HIV/AIDS treatment data and manufacturing, resulting in a collaboration that was the turning point for what had been a catastrophically grim pandemic. By working together, the companies demonstrated that any one anti-HIV/AIDS drug, taken as monotherapy, would fail, possibly even hasten the pace of the disease process. But when taken in combinations of three or four drugs, made by usually rival companies, the antiviral assault was so powerful that people bounced back from the edge of death like the Biblical Lazarus who was resurrected by Jesus.

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/05/07/stopping-drug-patents-pandemics-coronavirus-hiv-aids/>

As the Covid-19 crisis ebbs in the U.S., experts brace for some to experience psychological fallout

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The end of the emergency phase of the pandemic is in sight in the United States, at least for now. But as the weight of the crisis is lifted, experts are also anticipating a long-term impact on people's mental health. For some people, the feelings of anxiety and depression that emerged during the pandemic will resolve as routines resume — people go back to the office, social connections are reformed, the seeming danger of activities dissipates. But others will face new or worse mental health issues that persist or even appear down the road, a number that could be quite large given the magnitude of despair and disruption. That burden, however big, stands to put an even greater strain on an already stretched mental health system.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/05/07/as-the-covid-19-crisis-ebbs-in-the-u-s-experts-brace-for-a-long-term-impact-on-mental-health/>

Covid-19: Africa scrambles to increase genomic testing capacity as variants spread

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African countries are struggling to bolster genomic sequencing as SARS-CoV-2 variants spread on the continent, reports Abdullahi Tsanni. As the world entered 2021, the covid-19 pandemic began a new phase, one dominated by worries over emerging variants. But the way of detecting these threats has not been standardised—even in the UK, where genomic sequencing is relatively frequent, only 5-10% of covid-19 positive cases were being sequenced at the start of the year. The spotlight on sequencing has highlighted inequalities in global capacity. Many countries in Africa do not perform sequencing themselves, and those that do only do so on a small scale. Genomic sequencing requires expertise, machinery, software, reagents, and funding. Over the past year, as African countries grappled with scaling up basic testing capacity for covid-19, it hasn't been a high priority. But as variants such as B.1.351—first identified in South Africa and which now accounts for some 90% of the country's covid-19 cases—led to growing concern, there are worries that the lack of sequencing capacity will leave the continent unable to spot and stop variant outbreaks before they fuel a new wave of infections.

<https://www.bmj.com/content/373/bmj.n1122>

To Mask Up or Not To Mask Up - That is the question

To mask or not to mask? With vaccines and new guidelines, the mask-faithful navigate a 'weird gray area.'

When David Díaz went for a recent five-mile run in Iowa City, he took along a partner he has

depended on for more than a year: his face mask. Díaz, 29, knew he did not have to. He's fully vaccinated, and recent federal guidance says unmasked, outdoor exercise is safe. At first, he wore the mask around his neck. But after passing people one block later, he pulled it up — and then began wondering why. Was he posturing? Was he showing concern for others? Was he worried passersby would view him as an anti-masker? Was he actually being anti-science? "At what point are you doing more harm than good and letting fear or something rule your life?" Díaz, a data analytics consultant, said days later. "It's still a thing I'm trying to work through."

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2021/05/08/confusion-changing-mask-guidelines/>

Fauci says face masks could become seasonal after Covid pandemic

White House chief medical advisor Dr. Anthony Fauci said Sunday that people may wear masks during certain seasons when respiratory illnesses are more prevalent. "We've had practically a non-existent flu season this year [...]," Fauci said. His comments come less than a month after the Biden administration announced a relaxation of federal guidance on wearing masks outdoors.

<https://www.cnbc.com/2021/05/09/fauci-says-face-masks-could-become-seasonal-after-covid-pandemic.html>

Covid-19: HSE advises people to wear face masks as restrictions ease

Families have been advised to maintain social distancing and to wear masks when meeting after Covid-19 restrictions are eased next week. The so-called "vaccine bonus" will see fully vaccinated people from up to three households permitted to mix indoors from Monday. The same will also apply to those who received a first AstraZeneca shot more than four weeks ago and to people who have had a PCR test confirmed infection in the past six months. These groups can also meet indoors with unvaccinated people from another household, provided they are not at risk of severe illness. The measures aim to benefit older people and those with health conditions who have had to spend lengthy periods cocooning since the pandemic began.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/health/covid-19-hse-advises-people-to-wear-face-masks-as-restrictions-ease-1.4558651>

UK government 'failed to consider gender' in its response to Covid pandemic

UK government 'failed to consider gender' in its response to Covid pandemic

The government has "consistently failed" to consider gender in its response to Covid-19 despite men and women being affected in distinct ways by the pandemic, claim researchers from the London School of Economics. While more men have died from the virus, women have suffered more due to the impact of policies introduced to prevent disease transmission. Yet the subject of gender was largely absent from crucial meetings that informed the government's response to the crisis, say academics, who analysed the minutes from 73 meetings held in 2020 by the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (Sage).

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/08/uk-government-failed-to-consider-gender-in-its-response-to-covid-pandemic>

Vaccines and Variants

Preparations are underway for potential Covid-19 vaccine boosters, CDC director says

As experts grow concerned about a possible Covid-19 surge in the winter, the director of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention acknowledged it's still possible seasonal vaccine boosters will be necessary. "We want to hope for the best, and prepare for the worst," CDC director Dr. Rochelle Walensky told actress Jennifer Garner in an interview streamed on Instagram. More than a third of the US is fully vaccinated against coronavirus, but it's still short of the benchmark of 70% to 85% of the total population that needs to be immune -- through vaccination or previous infection -- to control its spread. And many yet to receive the vaccine are those who have not decided whether they want it or have decided against it.

<https://www.cbs58.com/news/preparations-are-underway-for-potential-covid-19-vaccine-boosters-cdc-director-says>

Covid-19: More Vaccines Near Approval, but Global Drive Could Remain Stalled

The World Health Organization on Friday approved China's Sinopharm's Covid-19 vaccine for emergency use, easing the way for poorer nations to get access to another much-needed shot to help end the pandemic. The approval allows the Sinopharm vaccine to be included in Covax, the World Health Organization's global initiative that is designed to promote equitable vaccine distribution around the world. The need is dire

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/07/world/who-covid-sinopharm-vaccine.html>

How the U.S. locked up vaccine materials other nations urgently need

To fight the pandemic at home, the United States gave its own vaccine manufacturers priority access to American-made materials needed to make the shots. As a result, the U.S. government laid claim not only to vast quantities of finished COVID-19 vaccines but also to vaccine components and equipment all along the supply chain, according to a Reuters review of more than a dozen contracts involving some major suppliers. That has left some countries desperately in need of those supplies to scramble for substitutes, exacerbating international disparities in vaccine access, according to interviews with suppliers, foreign manufacturers and vaccine market experts.

https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/how-us-locked-up-vaccine-materials-other-nations-urgently-need-2021-05-07/?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=twitter

Covid-19 vaccines: Why some African states have leftover doses

Malawi has been left with 16,400 doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, while South Sudan has 59,000 - all now past their expiry date, 13 April. Both countries say they have decided to destroy these consignments, donated via the African Union, despite the World Health Organization (WHO) asking for them to be kept while it investigates whether the expiry date can be safely extended.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/56940657>

Confidence in Chinese coronavirus vaccine falls as UAE Covid cases remain high

The vaccination programme in the United Arab Emirates has failed to quash its coronavirus outbreak, raising fears about the efficacy of the Chinese Sinopharm vaccine it is mostly using. The UAE has vied with Israel for having the highest proportion of the population vaccinated. More than half of all adults have had two jabs. However, cases remain higher than they were last year. While Dubai has come under fire for its rapid reopening — few restrictions remain, other than venue capacity limits and mandatory masks — experts believe the UAE's widespread use of the Sinopharm vaccine could also be to blame.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/confidence-in-chinese-coronavirus-vaccine-falls-as-uae-covid-cases-remain-high-tj9fwz60z>

WHO lists Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use

The World Health Organization (WHO) approved emergency listing for China's Sinopharm vaccine, a step that clears the way for a sixth vaccine to be added to the COVAX program. Today's announcement caps the review of Sinopharm's inactivated vero cell virus vaccine by two WHO vaccine advisory groups. The WHO's technical advisory group (TAG) approved the vaccine for emergency listing. Meanwhile, the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE) recommended the vaccine for people 18 years of age and older on a two-dose schedule given 3 to 4 weeks apart. WHO advisors are also reviewing a second vaccine from China, one made by Sinovac.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/05/who-lists-sinopharm-covid-19-vaccine-emergency-use>

What's the Valneva COVID-19 vaccine, the French shot that's supposed to be 'variant proof'?

A COVID-19 vaccine from French company Valneva has yet to complete clinical trials. But it has caught the eye of governments in the UK, Europe and Australia. One of the vaccine's main selling points is its apparent ability to mount a more general immune response against SARS-CoV-2, the

virus that causes COVID-19, rather than rely on the spike protein to do this.

<https://theconversation.com/whats-the-valneva-covid-19-vaccine-the-french-shot-thats-supposed-to-be-variant-proof-160345>

Sri Lanka approves Pfizer COVID vaccine for emergency use

Sri Lanka on Saturday approved Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use in Sri Lanka, as the island nation battles a third wave of the virus, while suffering a restricted supply of vaccines from neighboring India. Dr. Sudharshani Fernandopulle, the minister overseeing the fight against the epidemic, said in a statement the government would order 5 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/sri-lanka-approves-pfizer-covid-vaccine-emergency-use-2021-05-08/>

Why mixing vaccines could help boost immunity

A handful of trials are now under way to test the power of vaccine combinations, with the first results due in later this month. If these mixed regimens prove safe and effective, countries will be able to keep the vaccine rollout moving even if supplies of one vaccine dwindle because of manufacturing delays, unforeseen shortages, or safety concerns. But there's another, more exciting prospect that could be a vital part of our strategy in the future: mixing vaccines might lead to broader immunity and hamper the virus's attempts to evade our immune systems.

<https://www.technologyreview.com/2021/05/06/1024640/why-mixing-vaccines-could-help-boost-immunity/>

Covid-19: Vaccines will be tested against variants of concern after £29m funding boost from UK government

The efficacy of different covid-19 vaccines against variants of concern, including those first identified in the UK and South Africa, will be assessed by Public Health England after a funding boost from the government. The UK government's Vaccine Taskforce has announced £29.3m (€34m; \$40.8m) in extra funding for new facilities at Porton Down in Wiltshire, which will increase the site's capacity for testing variant samples from 1500 to 3000 a week. This is on top of a £19.7m investment approved last September to increase capacity for clinical testing of vaccines. The government has said that the Porton Down facilities will also be used for work to update existing vaccines to specifically target variants. Data are currently limited on the efficacy of vaccines against SARS-CoV-2 variants, as many of the earlier vaccine trials were carried out before these variants emerged.

<https://www.bmj.com/content/373/bmj.n1163>

Real-world studies detail high Pfizer COVID vaccine protection

Two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech mRNA COVID-19 vaccine were highly effective in preventing coronavirus-related infections and severe outcomes, according to two new studies from Israel and one from the United States.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/05/real-world-studies-detail-high-pfizer-covid-vaccine-protection>

New Covid-19 vaccine trial launched in York

A trial to test the efficacy of a new Covid-19 vaccine is taking place in York. It is the first time the city has participated in vaccine testing and will involve 150 people. The plant-derived vaccine has been developed by Medicago and GlaxoSmithKline. The trial is being delivered by the York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and the University of York. Globally 30,000 volunteers are being recruited for the phase three trial, including 1,500 across the UK. The trial is the sixth one in the UK to be supported by the National Institute for Health Excellence.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-york-north-yorkshire-57010324>

EU regulator begins real-time review of GSK-Vir COVID-19 antibody drug

Europe's medicines regulator said on Friday it has begun a real-time review of the COVID-19 antibody treatment developed by GSK (GSK.L) and Vir Biotechnology (VIR.O), formally kicking off the

process for a potential European Union (EU) approval. The so-called rolling review comes after the European Medicines Agency (EMA) last month began another review of early data to provide recommendations for national authorities in the trading bloc who may decide on early use of the medicine.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/eu-regulator-begins-real-time-review-gsk-virs-covid-19-antibody-drug-2021-05-07/>

Ramping up Testing

Egypt to test visitors from countries with COVID-19 variants on arrival

Egypt will require all visitors arriving from "countries where variants of the virus have appeared" to take a rapid COVID-19 test upon arrival, its health ministry said in a statement on Saturday. The statement did not specify the countries from which passengers would take the 15-minute DNA test, called ID NOW. Egypt's new coronavirus cases have been steadily rising in recent weeks. On Saturday it reported 1,125 new cases and 65 deaths, although experts say that reflects only a fraction of total cases.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/egypt-test-visitors-countries-with-covid-19-variants-arrival-2021-05-08/>

Patent Waivers

EU pushes back on Biden plan to waive coronavirus vaccine patents

EU leaders have a question for the President of the United States about waiving vaccine patents: So, how exactly is this going to go, Joe? Joe Biden may have initially set Europe on its heels with his surprise proposal to suspend intellectual property rights, but at a European Council summit in Porto, Portugal, top EU officials pushed back hard, saying Washington has not put forward a specific plan and that, in the near term, waiving patents would not help with the immediate, urgent need to increase production in poorer countries. "On the intellectual property, we don't think in the short term that it's the magic bullet but we are ready to engage on this topic as soon as a concrete proposal will be put on the table," European Council President Charles Michel said Saturday morning, summarizing a roughly three-hour dinner discussion among leaders on Friday night about the pandemic.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-pushes-back-on-biden-plan-to-waive-patents-as-contest-escalates-in-global-vaccine-diplomacy/>

Pope backs coronavirus vaccine patent waivers

Pope Francis on Saturday threw his support behind calls to waive intellectual property rights on coronavirus vaccines. In a pre-recorded video message at Vax Live, a fundraising concert, the pope described "closed nationalism," preventing an "internationalism of vaccines," as a variant of the virus. "Another variant is when we put the laws of the market ... or intellectual property over the laws of love and the health of humanity," he added, according to a Reuters report.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/pope-francis-backs-coronavirus-vaccine-patent-waivers/>

EU's Michel says US vaccine patent waiver will not solve supply problem

EU leaders have confronted the Biden administration over its calls for Covid-19 vaccine patent waivers and urged the US to export jabs directly if it wants to help poor countries in need. German Chancellor Angela Merkel said after a two-day EU leaders' summit in Porto, Portugal, that suspending intellectual property rights was no solution to supply shortages and called for a focus on ramping up production instead. France's President Emmanuel Macron and top EU officials echoed the German premier's rhetoric as the union scrambled to respond to this week's surprise US move. Both powers are attempting to fend off accusations they are hoarding vaccines as much of the world sees few or no shipments.

<https://www.ft.com/content/92510f77-07ae-4082-8930-c8e9fb58bd1e>

EU supports COVID vaccine patent waiver talks, but critics say won't solve scarcity

The European Union on Thursday backed a U.S. proposal to discuss waiving patent protections for COVID-19 vaccines, but drugmakers and some other governments opposed the idea, saying it would not solve global inoculation shortages. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen expressed willingness to explore a waiver after President Joe Biden on Wednesday promoted the plan, reversing the U.S. position

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eu-willing-discuss-covid-19-vaccine-patent-waiver-eus-von-der-leyen-2021-05-06/>

Tourism, Opening After Lockdowns

Hong Kong coronavirus: local tours finally resume after six-month hiatus

At least a dozen tour companies are offering local outings this weekend, a better showing than last week, when most were unprepared to relaunch under the new scheme. The resumption of business prompted equal measures of joy and wariness for one cash-starved operator, who voiced concerns about a potential spike in Covid-19 cases after the discovery of mutant strains in the city

<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/health-environment/article/3132763/hong-kong-coronavirus-local-tours-finally-resume>

Hoping to lure back tourists, Greece reopens beaches after lockdown

With widely spaced sun loungers and regular disinfections, Greece reopened its organised beaches on Saturday as the popular Mediterranean holiday destination eases COVID-19 curbs in preparation for the return of foreign visitors next week. Tourism accounts for about a fifth of Greece's economy and jobs, and - after the worst year on record for the industry last year - the country can ill afford another lost summer.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/hoping-lure-back-tourists-greece-reopens-beaches-after-lockdown-2021-05-08/>

Britain reopens travel from May 17 but to just 12 destinations

Britain will allow international travel to resume from May 17 but is limiting the number of destinations open for quarantine-free holidays to just 12 countries as it cautiously emerges from lockdown restrictions. Countries including Portugal and Israel made a green list of countries for low risk travel for people from England, transport minister Grant Shapps said on Friday. The most popular destinations such as France, Spain and Greece did not make the list.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/retail-consumer/britain-reopens-travel-may-17-just-12-destinations-2021-05-07/>

The Indian Variant

Indian Covid variant is 'of concern', says Public Health England

A coronavirus variant first detected in India has been designated a "variant of concern" by England's public health body, as consternation about its spread within communities grows. The variant, called B.1.617.2 is one of three closely related variants that were first detected in India and have since been found in the UK, with the others known as B.1.617.1 and B.1.617.3. These variants have worried scientists as they have mutations in their spike protein that it is thought may help the virus to evade the body's immune responses and be more transmissible. The variant B.1.617.2, also known as VOC-21APR-02, has caused particular consternation as its numbers have risen rapidly in the UK.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/07/indian-covid-variant-is-variant-of-concern-says-public-health-england>

Britain labels coronavirus "variant of concern" linked to travel from India

British health officials on Friday labelled a coronavirus variant first found in India a "variant of concern" due to evidence it spreads more easily, with Prime Minister Boris Johnson saying the

situation needed careful handling. Public Health England designated variant B.1.617.2, one of three variants identified in India that has spread to Britain, a variant of concern. Surge testing was being carried out in areas where evidence indicates community spread. Cases of the B.1.617.2 variant increased to 520 from 202 over the last week, PHE said, mainly in London and the northwest town of Bolton, with almost half the cases related to contact with a traveller.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/british-officials-warn-over-indian-coronavirus-variant-reports-2021-05-07/>

India's covid-19 catastrophe is a failure of national and global public health and policy response to the pandemic

The horrendous second wave of covid-19 in India, home to nearly a fifth of the world's population, has engulfed the vast nation in death, despair, and despondency. The graphic scenes of suffering, people dying for lack of oxygen and medical care amid a shortage of medications and basic amenities, coupled with mass cremations and burials, grieving families, over-stretched healthcare workers, and sheer human helplessness is hard to watch. India is already recording nearly 400,000 reported cases per day (the actual number may be eight to ten-fold higher), and some models project the numbers may rise to 800,000 or even a million cases per day and 5-10,000 deaths per day by mid- or late-May.

<https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2021/05/08/indias-covid-19-catastrophe-is-a-failure-of-national-and-global-public-health-and-policy-response-to-the-pandemic/>

Covid-19: Cargo plane leaves NI with medical aid for India

Britain will allow international travel to resume from May 17 but is limiting the number of destinations open for quarantine-free holidays to just 12 countries as it cautiously emerges from lockdown restrictions. Countries including Portugal and Israel made a green list of countries for low risk travel for people from England, transport minister Grant Shapps said on Friday. The most popular destinations such as France, Spain and Greece did not make the list.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-57019631>

Mucormycosis: The 'black fungus' maiming Covid patients in India

On Saturday morning, Dr Akshay Nair, a Mumbai-based eye surgeon, was waiting to operate on a 25-year-old woman who had recovered from a bout of Covid-19 three weeks ago. Inside the surgery, an ear, nose and throat specialist was already at work on the patient, a diabetic. He had inserted a tube in her nose and was removing tissues infected with mucormycosis, a rare but dangerous fungal infection. This aggressive infection affects the nose, eye and sometimes the brain. After his colleague finished, Dr Nair would carry out a three hour procedure to remove the patient's eye.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-57027829>

Delhi hospital warns of alarming rise in Covid-induced black fungus

A hospital in Delhi, the epicentre of coronavirus in India, has reported the resurgence of deadly Covid-induced black fungal infections in patients. These types of infections can cause loss of sight and can lead to corrective measures such as the amputation of the affected area. According to Delhi doctors patients who contract black fungus only have a 50 percent survival rate.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/asia/india/delhi-covid-mucormycosis-black-fungus-b1843649.html>

SAfrica picks up first cases of coronavirus variant from India

South Africa's health ministry said on Saturday it had detected the first four cases of a new coronavirus variant that emerged in India and was responsible for a surge of infections and deaths in the Asian country. Testing had also picked up 11 cases of the variant B.1.1.7 first detected in the UK, the health ministry said in a statement. "The Network for Genomic Surveillance in South Africa confirmed today that two variants of concern, other than the B.1.351 already dominating in South Africa, have been detected," Health Minister Zweli Mkhize said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/safrica-picks-up-first-cases-coronavirus-variant-india-2021-05-08/>

Bangladesh detects first cases of Indian coronavirus variant

Bangladesh has detected its first case of a highly infectious coronavirus variant first identified in India, the country's health directorate said on Saturday, prompting the government to keep its border sealed for another two weeks. Six cases of the Indian variant had been detected in Bangladesh, Nasima Sultana, additional director general of the health directorate, told reporters. "Two cases are confirmed to be of the Indian variant, and the others are quite close to it," Sultana said, adding that they all recently returned from neighbouring India and were in isolation.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/bangladesh-detects-first-cases-indian-coronavirus-variant-2021-05-08/>

Indian states impose stricter lockdowns as COVID deaths hit record high

India on Saturday reported its highest ever single-day COVID-19 death toll, as cases continued to rise and states imposed stricter lockdowns. India's health ministry reported 4,187 fatalities over the past 24 hours, taking the overall death toll close to 240,000. The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation estimates that India will see 1 million COVID deaths by August. Cases rose by 401,078 on Saturday, bringing the total since the start of the pandemic to 21.9 million.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/india-posts-record-daily-rise-covid-19-deaths-case-numbers-surge-2021-05-08/>

New Lockdowns

India's daily Covid death toll tops more than 4,000 for first time as cases surge across the virus-ravaged country and two more states go into lockdown

India is currently being devastated by a deadly second wave of Covid. You can support Oxfam's Covid relief efforts in India, including reaching out to the most affected and vulnerable communities, distributing and installing medical equipment and accessories, and supporting the most marginalised households. You can donate here. For the first time, India has recorded more than 4,000 Covid-19 related deaths as cases continue to surge across the country and two more states go into lockdown. Saturday's record of 4,187 deaths takes the country's official death toll from the virus to nearly 240,000, although the true figure is believed to be much higher.

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/indias-daily-covid-death-toll-tops-more-than-4000-for-first-time/ar-BB1gv56O>

Tunisia to impose one-week COVID lockdown from Sunday

Tunisia will impose a full lockdown against COVID-19 for one week from Sunday, Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi said on Friday.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-tunisia-idUSL8N2MU2V6>

Pakistan imposes Eid lockdown as COVID cases soar

Pakistan on Saturday began a nine-day shutdown affecting travel and tourist hotspots in a bid to prevent a surge in COVID-19 cases during the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr. Already battling a third wave of infections and increasingly nervous about the crisis across the border in India, the government has imposed the most severe restrictions since a one-month lockdown in April last year. "From today all businesses across the country will be closed. People will not be allowed to go into the markets to do their shopping for Eid," Al Jazeera's Kamal Hyder reported from the capital, Islamabad. Hyder said the Pakistani government feared that it will not be able to cope due to a possible lack of ventilators and oxygen if the "situation sees the likes of which India is confronting".

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/8/pakistan-imposes-eid-lockdown-as-covid-cases-soar>

Australia's most populous state extends COVID restrictions in hunt for outbreak source

Australia's most populous state recorded no new COVID-19 infections for a third straight day on Sunday but extended raised social distancing and mask-wearing rules by a week as the authorities hunted for the source of a small outbreak. After a Sydney couple tested positive to the coronavirus last week, ending a long run without community transmission, the authorities reinstated some social distancing measures until May 10, and a campaign to get more people tested, as they scrambled to

determine the source of infection.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/australias-most-populous-state-extends-covid-restrictions-hunt-outbreak-source-2021-05-09/>

'Approved' or 'authorized'? When it comes to COVID-19 vaccines, words matter

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Pfizer and partner BioNTech have asked the Food and Drug Administration for full approval for their COVID-19 vaccine, a regulatory benchmark beyond the current emergency use authorization granted during the pandemic. Moderna and Johnson & Johnson are expected to submit similar requests before too long. Many are eager for COVID-19 vaccines to advance to full-approval status as they believe this will reassure those who are vaccine hesitant while also helping employers and universities to enforce vaccine mandates. It also would ensure that COVID-19 vaccines still could still be administered after the pandemic ends, and the declaration of "emergency" is over. "If the FDA provides full approval for these vaccines, we hope it will provide more confidence and ease the concerns of those who have not yet received the vaccine," said Dr. Michelle Medina, associate chief of clinical operations for Cleveland Clinic Community Health.

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/approved-authorized-covid-19-vaccines-words-matter/story?id=77554910>

What's the Valneva COVID-19 vaccine, the French shot that's supposed to be 'variant proof'?

What's the Valneva COVID-19 vaccine, the French shot that's supposed to be 'variant proof'?

A COVID-19 vaccine from French company Valneva has yet to complete clinical trials. But it has caught the eye of governments in the UK, Europe and Australia. One of the vaccine's main selling points is its apparent ability to mount a more general immune response against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, rather than rely on the spike protein to do this.

<https://theconversation.com/whats-the-valneva-covid-19-vaccine-the-french-shot-thats-supposed-to-be-variant-proof-160345>

Real-world studies detail high Pfizer COVID vaccine protection

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Two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech mRNA COVID-19 vaccine were highly effective in preventing coronavirus-related infections and severe outcomes, according to two new studies from Israel and one from the United States.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/05/real-world-studies-detail-high-pfizer-covid-vaccine-protection>

New Covid-19 vaccine trial launched in York

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A trial to test the efficacy of a new Covid-19 vaccine is taking place in York. It is the first time the city has participated in vaccine testing and will involve 150 people. The plant-derived vaccine has been developed by Medicago and GlaxoSmithKline. The trial is being delivered by the York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and the University of York. Globally 30,000 volunteers are being recruited for the phase three trial, including 1,500 across the UK. The trial is the sixth one in the UK to be supported by the National Institute for Health Excellence.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-york-north-yorkshire-57010324>

Pfizer, AstraZeneca COVID vaccines probed in Europe after reports of heart inflammation, rare nerve disorder

Pfizer, AstraZeneca COVID vaccines probed in Europe after reports of heart inflammation, rare nerve disorder

Europe's drug regulator says it's evaluating an assortment of potential side effects following

inoculation with leading COVID-19 vaccines, including heart inflammation, facial swelling and a rare nerve-degenerating disorder. Yet in most circumstances, it's not clear whether the vaccines are to blame. In AstraZeneca's case, the European Medicines Agency's safety committee, known as PRAC for short, said it's examining reports of Guillain-Barre syndrome (GBS) among people who received the drugmaker's COVID-19 vaccine, according to a report released on Friday. The agency is tracking the data for all coronavirus shots as part of its routine safety procedures.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/europe-s-drug-regulator-evaluates-reports-heart-inflammation-rare-nerve-disorder-covid-19>

Vietnam reports first death in patient who received AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine

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Vietnam's health ministry on Friday reported its first death in a patient who received AstraZeneca's (AZN.L) COVID-19 vaccine shot, as the country is battling a new outbreak. A 35-year-old female health worker in the southern province of An Giang died on Friday, one day after she received her first coronavirus vaccine shot, the Ministry of Health said in a statement, adding that she died from allergic reaction known as anaphylaxis. "This is a very rare case in the vaccination against COVID-19," the ministry said in the statement.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/vietnam-reports-first-death-patient-who-received-astrazeneca-covid-19-vaccine-2021-05-07/>

Thailand set to boost COVID-19 vaccinations, expects to approve Moderna shots

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Thailand expects to offer the Moderna (MRNA.O) vaccine to most of its population soon as it steps up the rollout of its COVID-19 vaccination campaign, a health official said on Saturday.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/thailand-reports-2419-new-coronavirus-cases-19-new-deaths-2021-05-08/>

COVID-19: Safety fears and potential side effects putting people off vaccine, official figures show

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Safety fears are the most common reason for people not getting a coronavirus vaccine, official figures have shown. The speed at which the jab has been developed and potential long-term side effects were also among concerns, according to data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Another major reason is many think catching COVID-19 does not pose a significant risk to their health - particularly young people and those who believe their immune systems are strong enough to fight the virus without the jab.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-safety-fears-and-potential-side-effects-putting-people-off-vaccine-official-figures-show-12299316>

The misinformation bubble threatening Brazil's indigenous people

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False information from the mouths of politicians and preachers is reaching remote villages in the Amazon via WhatsApp, reports BBC News Brasil's Juliana Gragnani. A helicopter loaded with health workers and coronavirus vaccine doses took off from Labrea, in the southern part of the Amazon, heading to a village some 50km away. But the villagers, part of the indigenous Jamamadi group, greeted the chopper armed with bows and arrows - and demanded that it leave. They'd been hearing false rumours about vaccines and wanted reassurances from a religious missionary - not doctors - before getting jabbed. The helicopter left without administering any of the doses.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-trending-56919424>