

# COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

## 15th Feb 2022

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### Lockdown Exit

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#### **China's Approval of Pfizer Pill Opens Door to Ending Covid Zero**

China's surprise decision to clear Pfizer Inc.'s coronavirus pill for use offers rare insight into how Beijing may be planning to move beyond the Covid Zero strategy that's leaving it increasingly isolated. Paxlovid's conditional approval over the weekend makes it the first foreign pharmaceutical product China has endorsed for Covid-19, with the country until now sticking steadfastly to domestically developed vaccines and therapeutics, even withholding approval for the highly potent mRNA shot co-produced by Pfizer and BioNTech SE. Pfizer's pill will serve a strategic purpose, said Zeng Guang, a former chief scientist at the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention who advised Beijing on Covid control, told investors in a briefing organized by Sealand Securities Co. on Saturday, hours after the approval was announced.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-02-14/china-s-approval-of-pfizer-pill-opens-door-to-ending-covid-zero>

#### **Hong Kong Virus Cases Top 2,000 And Are Set to Double Again**

Hong Kong's daily virus cases topped 2,000 for the first time, with the worsening outbreak throwing the city's Covid Zero push into disarray. Health authorities announced 2,071 cases on Monday, as well as 4,500 preliminary infections. Cases have exceeded capacity at Hong Kong's public hospitals, health officials have said, adding they will now shift to prioritizing care for the elderly and children who get Covid. Authorities said thousands of people are waiting to be hospitalized and a backlog at its testing facilities means there is a delay in confirming positive cases.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-02-13/hong-kong-in-crisis-leans-on-beijing-to-contain-covid-surge>

#### **U.S. offers \$69 million in aviation manufacturing assistance**

The U.S. Transportation Department said on Friday it was offering \$69 million to 127 aviation manufacturing and repair businesses under a COVID-19 relief program created by Congress in 2021. In total, the department has offered \$673 million nationwide in three rounds of awards. Some previously offered awards were not ultimately paid. The \$3 billion aviation manufacturing payroll subsidy program covers up to half of eligible companies' compensation costs for up to six months. Grantees may not conduct furloughs without employee consent or lay off workers covered by subsidies during that period.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/us-offers-69-mln-aviation-manufacturing-assistance-2022-02-11/>

#### **Kuwait lifts many COVID restrictions, allows travel abroad**

Kuwait's cabinet has lifted many COVID-19 restrictions including a ban on foreign travel, a move that will also apply to those who are not vaccinated, Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah al-Khalid al-Sabah said on Monday. The unvaccinated will still have to get a PCR test 72 hours before boarding a flight to the Gulf Arab state and quarantine for seven days after arrival, while those who are vaccinated would not be required to do so. Some of the restrictions lifted from next week would include allowing the unvaccinated to enter shopping malls, as well as inside cinemas, theatres and banquet halls if they present a negative PCR test.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/kuwait-lifts-many-covid-restrictions-allows-travel-abroad-2022-02-14/>

#### **Turk sets unenviable COVID record by testing positive for 14 straight months**

When Muzaffer Kayasan first caught COVID-19, he thought he was destined to die since he was already suffering from leukemia. Fourteen months and 78 straight positive tests later, he is still alive - and still battling to shake off the infection. Kayasan, 56, has Turkey's longest recorded continuous COVID-19 infection, doctors say, possibly due to a weakened immune system from the cancer. Despite being in and out of hospital since November 2020, his spirits have been high. "I guess this is the female version of COVID - she has been obsessed with me," Kayasan joked last week as he found out that his latest PCR test was, yet again, positive.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/turk-sets-unenviable-covid-record-by-testing-positive-14-straight-months-2022-02-14/>

### **U.S. urges Americans to avoid travel to South Korea, Belarus over COVID**

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Monday advised against travel to six countries and territories including South Korea, Azerbaijan and Belarus due to widespread COVID-19. The CDC also added Comoros, French Polynesia, and Saint Pierre and Miquelon to its risk list of "Level Four: Very High." The U.S. State Department also raised its travel advisory rating on Monday for South Korea, Indonesia and Azerbaijan to "Level 4: Do Not Travel."

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-urges-americans-avoid-travel-south-korea-belarus-over-covid-2022-02-14/>

### **Germany's COVID case numbers drop as country waits for opening**

Coronavirus case numbers have slightly dropped in Germany, as the government plans to loosen coronavirus restrictions in Europe's biggest economy. Germany reported 76,465 new daily coronavirus cases on Monday, down 20% from the same day last week. The 7-day infection incidence per 100,000 people also fell to 1,460 from 1,467 on Sunday. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and the heads of the federal states are due to meet on Wednesday to discuss possible easing.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/germanys-covid-case-numbers-drop-country-waits-opening-2022-02-14/>

### **Norway to end most pandemic curbs**

Norway will scrap nearly all its remaining COVID-19 lockdown measures as high levels of coronavirus infections are unlikely to jeopardise health services, Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Stoere said on Saturday. The Nordic country, which removed most curbs on Feb. 1, will still keep some restrictions for the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard. The new rules will take effect from Saturday at 1000 CET (0900 GMT). read more "We are removing almost all coronavirus measures," Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Stoere told a news conference.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/norway-end-most-pandemic-curbs-2022-02-12/>

### **Hong Kong "overwhelmed" as COVID infections hit record**

The latest wave of COVID-19 infections has "overwhelmed" Hong Kong, the city's leader said on Monday as daily cases surged by some 20 times over the past two weeks, leaving hospitals short of beds and struggling to cope. Carrie Lam, the head of the administration in the Chinese ruled city, issued a grim update for residents already subjected to tight restrictions on social gatherings as health authorities reported a record 2,071 infections on Monday, with 4,500 separate preliminary positive cases. "The onslaught of the fifth wave of the epidemic has dealt a heavy blow to Hong Kong and overwhelmed the city's capacity of handling," Lam said

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/hong-kong-leader-says-fifth-covid-wave-has-overwhelmed-citys-capacity-2022-02-14/>

### **President Biden's Global Covid Vaccine Push Falters, Echoing Domestic Struggle**

President Joe Biden's effort to vaccinate the world against Covid-19 is falling short, echoing the faltering campaign to inoculate Americans and raising the risk that more dangerous variants of the virus will yet emerge. Secretary of State Antony Blinken acknowledged in a virtual meeting with other countries on Monday that the globe is not on pace to meet a goal of vaccinating 70% of the

entire human population by later this year, a target set in 2021 both by Biden and the World Health Organization. Low-income countries -- particularly in Africa, where the omicron variant was first detected -- remain overwhelmingly unvaccinated.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-02-14/biden-s-global-vaccine-push-falters-echoing-home-front-struggle>

### **Trucker Protests: Justin Trudeau Invokes Emergency Powers, Seeks to Halt Funding**

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau invoked sweeping emergency powers Monday to quell protests against vaccine mandates and other Covid-19 restrictions, including measures to choke off the flow of money to demonstrators. Banks and financial institutions will be required to review their relationships with anyone involved in an illegal blockade and report them. They'll have the authority to stop providing services to those suspected of using their accounts to help the protesters and to freeze accounts without getting a court order.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-02-14/trudeau-wields-emergency-police-powers-against-trucker-protests>

## **Exit Strategies**

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### **Canada's Ontario to lift some pandemic measures, Alberta ends masks in schools**

The Canadian province of Ontario said it will speed up its plan to remove proof-of-vaccination requirements and lift pandemic-related capacity limits for many businesses while the western province of Alberta ended its mask requirements for school children on Monday. The moves, which the provinces' premiers attributed to a waning Omicron wave, comes as protesters opposed to pandemic measures closed three border crossings with the United States and paralyzed parts of Ottawa for three weeks

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/canadas-ontario-lift-covid-related-capacity-limits-restaurants-bars-thursday-2022-02-14/>

### **New Covid jabs ad campaign aimed at unvaccinated Brits amid fears they are vulnerable to fresh waves of virus**

The Government has launched a new advertising campaign aimed at convincing unvaccinated people to get a Covid-19 jab amid fears they may be vulnerable in future waves of coronavirus. Covid cases, hospitalisations and deaths have all been declining rapidly in the past week with the figures returning to levels seen before the start of the Omicron wave. However, the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (Sage) has warned that if more people return to normal life, infections could soar again in the coming months.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/new-covid-jabs-ad-campaign-aimed-at-unvaccinated-brits-amid-fears-they-are-vulnerable-to-fresh-waves-of-virus-1459267>

### **Vaccine access puts EU and Africa at odds ahead of summit**

Europe's refusal to share COVID-19 vaccine technology threatens to overshadow a major gathering of European and African leaders this week. Europe wants to use the meeting — which has been delayed by 16 months due to the pandemic — to advance relations on several fronts, including trade and digital connectivity. But access to vaccines will be high on the agenda. African leaders are furious that the continent received mere "crumbs" from wealthy countries' overflowing plate of vaccines, leaving their populations much less protected against the virus. They will be looking to the two-day summit between the EU and African Union for evidence that Europe is serious about tackling what South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has blasted as "vaccine apartheid." And Europe shows no sign of moving on what is a central issue for many African leaders — loosening access to intellectual property on vaccines. "They hoarded vaccines, they ordered more vaccines than their populations require. The greed they demonstrated was disappointing, particularly when they say they are our partners," Ramaphosa said in December. "Because our lives in Africa are just

as important as lives in Europe, North America and all over."

<https://www.politico.eu/article/vaccine-access-eu-africa-summit-coronavirus/>

### **Tunisia entry requirements: New travel restrictions see Covid tests scrapped for vaccinated arrivals**

Fully vaccinated travellers visiting Tunisia from the UK will no longer be required to present a negative Covid test upon arrival. The rule change has been confirmed by the Foreign Office and comes into effect from Tuesday 15 February. Children who are unvaccinated will be allowed to test to enter, with either a PCR test less than 48 hours before travel, or an antigen test less than 24 hours before travel. Children aged six and under are exempt from all testing and vaccine requirements.

<https://inews.co.uk/inews-lifestyle/travel/tunisia-entry-requirements-new-travel-restrictions-covid-tests-scrapped-vaccinated-arrivals-1460062>

### **Germany's plan for vaccination mandate losing momentum**

Germany's plans to introduce a general vaccination mandate this spring are faltering, as a growing number of politicians question if it will find a majority in parliament. The Bundestag was originally due to debate motions in favour and against mandatory vaccinations this week, after the chancellor, Olaf Scholz, indicated he considered such a step necessary to cope with a possible resurgence of the virus in the next few months. But the timetable that was meant to see a mandate passed in March has already begun to slip, as a Free Democratic party (FDP) politician said his third-way motion proposing mandatory vaccinations for those aged 50 and over would be submitted with a delay.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/feb/14/germany-plan-general-covid-vaccination-mandate-losing-momentum-bundestag-debate-march>

### **Covid-19 news: US and UK delay next decisions on child vaccinations**

US awaits more data on vaccinating under-5s while UK government delays decision on vaccinating 5-to-11-year-olds. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has delayed a decision on whether to approve the Pfizer/BioNTech coronavirus vaccine for children between 6 months to 4 years of age in the US. A decision was due to be made tomorrow. On 11 February, the agency said it had decided to wait for more data from clinical trials involving under-5s before making a decision. Earlier this month, Pfizer and BioNTech submitted data on two doses of a three-dose regimen for 6-month-to-five-year-olds to the FDA, but "it makes sense to wait for the safety and efficacy data on all three doses to be available before we make a decision about this vaccine," said Paul Offit, a member of the FDA's Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee. The data on three shots is due to be available in early April.

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2237475-covid-19-news-us-and-uk-delay-next-decisions-on-child-vaccinations/>

### **In relief for retailers, Vietnam won't close factories amid COVID surge**

Vietnamese factories making everything from shoes to smartphones are expected to continue production despite record COVID-19 infections, reversing a policy of sweeping lockdowns last year that hobbled global supply chains for Western retailers. One of the world's biggest garment makers, Vietnam reported more than 26,000 new infections on Sunday, or about double the peak last year, when factories supplying brands such as Nike, Zara, Apple and Samsung were shut for months.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/relief-retailers-vietnam-wont-close-factories-amid-covid-surge-2022-02-14/>

### **South Korea to start giving fourth doses of COVID vaccine**

South Korea will begin giving out fourth doses of COVID-19 vaccines this month and supply millions of additional home test kits to ease shortages amid a surge in Omicron infections, authorities confirmed on Monday. The surge has pushed daily cases to records, but widespread vaccination, with first booster shots received by more than 57 percent of the population of 52 million, has helped

limit deaths and serious infections. High-risk groups will be the first to get the fourth dose, in effect a second booster shot, Health Minister Kwon Deok-cheol told a COVID-19 response meeting.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/skorea-start-giving-fourth-doses-covid-vaccine-by-month-end-2022-02-14/>

### **Sweden recommends fourth COVID-19 jab for the elderly**

Sweden's Health Agency recommended on Monday that people aged 80 or above should receive a second booster shot of COVID-19 vaccine, the fourth jab in total, to ward off waning immunity amid the rampant spread of the Omicron variant. The recommendation also covered all people living in nursing homes or who receive assisted living services at home. The second booster shot should be administered at least four months after the first booster jab, the agency said in a statement. Sweden hit record levels of infections earlier this year as Omicron spread rapidly across the country.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/sweden-recommends-fourth-covid-19-jab-elderly-2022-02-14/>

### **Taiwan says needs to re-open, eyes March cut to COVID quarantine**

Taiwan aims to ease its strict COVID-19 quarantine policy from next month as it needs to gradually resume normal life and re-open to the world, the government said on Monday. Since the pandemic began two years ago, Taiwan has succeeded in keeping reported cases of COVID-19 below 20,000, having enforced a blanket two-week quarantine for everyone arriving on the island even as large parts of the rest of the world have ditched theirs.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taiwan-says-needs-re-open-look-easing-covid-quarantine-rules-2022-02-14/>

### **New Zealand Self-Isolation Will Reduce in New Omicron Phase**

New Zealand will move to a new phase in its response to omicron as case numbers of the more infectious variant of Covid-19 begin to accelerate. From midnight Tuesday, phase 2 will take effect, attempting to minimize disruption to supply chains as the virus becomes more widespread, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said at a news conference Monday in Wellington. This means cases and close contacts will self-isolate for less time, and a scheme will be introduced allowing critical workers to remain in their jobs. The nation today reported nearly 1,800 cases over the weekend, up from a daily average of about 300 over the preceding seven days.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-02-14/new-zealand-self-isolation-will-reduce-in-new-omicron-phase>

### **Merck Japan says to accelerate imports of COVID-19 treatment**

The Japanese unit of Merck & Co Inc said on Monday it would accelerate imports of its oral COVID-19 treatment to help with a surge in cases caused by the Omicron variant. The company will deliver 800,000 courses of the antiviral molnupiravir to Japan by March, up from an earlier scheduled 600,000, it said in a statement. Japan agreed last year to pay Merck and its partner Ridgeback Biotherapeutics about \$1.2 billion for 1.6 million courses of molnupiravir. The drug was approved by regulators in late December.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/merck-japan-says-accelerate-imports-covid-19-treatment-2022-02-14/>

### **Hong Kong to vaccinate 3-year-olds amid new COVID-19 surge**

Hong Kong plans to offer COVID-19 vaccines to children as young as 3 as infections rage through the semi-autonomous Chinese city. The announcement late Sunday came ahead of another surge in cases. The city reported a record 2,071 new cases on Monday, with that number expected to double the next day with more than 4,500 preliminary positives identified. Hong Kong schools extended a suspension of in-class teaching for two weeks to March 6, The wave blamed on the omicron variant has already prompted new restrictions limiting in-person gatherings to no more than two households. Hong Kong residents have been rushing to grocery stores to stock up on vegetables and to hair salons to get haircuts.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-hong-kong-immunizations-lifestyle-875f16ea7c67de2a5a8e22777496e5a1>

## Partisan Exits

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### **New York City Fires 1430 Unvaccinated Workers Following Deadline**

More than 1,400 public-sector workers in New York City were fired over their refusal to get vaccinated before the city's mandated Feb. 11 deadline, most of whom were Department of Education employees. The terminations make up less than 1% of the city's 370,000-member workforce. About half of the 3,000 employees originally at risk for being fired decided to get vaccinated before the deadline, according to a City Hall spokesperson. New York City mayor Eric Adams characterized the employees' termination as quitting, saying that they're choosing to leave their jobs by not following the rules.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-02-14/nyc-fires-1-430-unvaccinated-workers-following-city-deadline>

### **New Zealand's PM signals harsher stance on vaccine protest**

New Zealand's prime minister on Monday said protesters who oppose coronavirus mandates were using "intimidation and harassment," as authorities appeared to take a harsher stance toward the convoy of demonstrators that has disrupted the capital of Wellington for nearly a week. Police initially let the protesters set up tents and camp on the grounds of New Zealand's Parliament before arresting 122 people on Thursday and then backing off again. The size of the protest dropped to a few hundred last week but increased again to around 3,000 over the weekend. Speaking with reporters, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern signaled the thinning patience of authorities. "I very clearly have a view on the protesters and the way that they've conducted their protest because it has moved beyond sharing a view to intimidation and harassment of the people around central Wellington," she said. "That cannot be tolerated." Parliament Speaker Trevor Mallard tried to make the protesters uncomfortable last week by turning on lawn sprinklers and blasting out decades-old Barry Manilow songs and the 1990s hit "Macarena" on a repeat loop.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-wellington-new-zealand-arrests-7ea0f3a7ae442f486314278d76433ceb>

### **French anti-vaxxers buying fake Covid passes online**

Anti-vaxxers in France are buying fake vaccine passes online to get around the country's Covid restrictions, which are often promoted on mainstream social media platforms, research has revealed. Many buying the forgeries, which can be used across the European Union (EU), are being redirected from websites such as Instagram and Facebook to the Telegram encrypted messenger where they can be bought discreetly, according to a study by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD). The report also raised concerns that social media algorithms are automatically directing people disillusioned with the French government's handling of the pandemic towards far-right online spaces.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/feb/14/french-anti-vaxxers-buying-fake-covid-passes-online>

### **'The only logical choice': anti-vaxxers who changed their minds on Covid vaccines**

Danielsen grew up in an anti-vaccine household, views she held well into adulthood. When her son was born, she declined all vaccines for him. Then she hit a personal crisis, and started rethinking all her beliefs – including on vaccinations. It was like pulling on a thread and watching an entire sweater unravel, she said. "The Covid vaccine was the only logical choice after really re-evaluating what I believe in, what I actually believe is true," Danielsen said.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/feb/14/covid-anti-vaxxers-changed-minds>

### **U.S.-Canada bridge reopens after police clear protesters**

North America's busiest trade link reopened for traffic late Sunday evening, ending a six-day blockade, Canada Border Services Agency said, after Canadian police cleared the protesters fighting to end COVID-19 restrictions. Canadian police made several arrests on Sunday and cleared protesters and vehicles that occupied the Ambassador Bridge in Windsor, Ontario, after a court order

on Friday. The blockade had choked the supply chain for Detroit's carmakers, forcing Ford Motor Co (F.N), the second-largest U.S. automaker, General Motors Co (GM.N) and Toyota Motor Corp (7203.T) to cut production.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/canada-protesters-police-deadlocked-tensions-simmer-blocked-border-bridge-2022-02-13/>

### **New Zealand's Ardern labels anti-vaccine mandate protests 'imported' as crowds defy calls to leave**

New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said on Monday she felt demonstrations against a COVID-19 vaccine mandate now entering their second week were an "imported" phenomenon, and nothing like anything she had seen before in the country. Hundreds of protesters continue to occupy lawns in front of the distinctive 'Beehive' parliament for a seventh day, ignoring repeated calls by the police to leave and undaunted by drenching rain over the weekend. Claiming inspiration from truckers' anti-vaccine mandate demonstrations in Canada, the protesters have also blocked several streets around parliament with their trucks, vans and motorcycles.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/new-zealands-ardern-labels-anti-vaccine-mandate-protests-imported-crowds-defy-2022-02-14/>

### **Ontario drops vaccine proof, protests persist**

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government weighed whether to invoke emergency powers Monday to quell the protests by demonstrators who have paralyzed Ottawa and blocked border crossings in anger over the country's COVID-19 restrictions. The prime minister met virtually with the leaders of Canada's provinces during the day and planned to address the nation Monday night. "This is the biggest, greatest, most severe test Trudeau has faced," said Wesley Wark, a University of Ottawa professor and national security expert. For more than two weeks, hundreds and sometimes thousands of protesters in trucks and other vehicles have clogged the streets of Ottawa, the capital, railing against vaccine mandates for truckers and other COVID-19 precautions and condemning Trudeau's Liberal government.

<https://apnews.com/article/canada-protest-police-reopen-border-bridge-6520c4d63add7a9d9342cffde1e4190e>

### **Police filter Brussels traffic to dilute trucker protests**

Plans for a major trucker virus protest near the European Union headquarters in Brussels fizzled Monday, with police filtering traffic during the morning rush hour to leave only a few scattered demonstrators on foot instead. Police narrowed some highways and imposed go-slow traffic early Monday in and around the Belgian capital to keep control of what it feared could turn into a choking protest like those by horn-honking truckers in Canada. Early indications didn't show a groundswell of support for the protest but police took extensive precautions. "We don't actually think that Brussels has been paralyzed. Anyone who wanted to enter Brussels with good intentions was able to do so — with some delay, of course," said federal police spokeswoman An Berger.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-business-paris-france-9b7ee331facaa6af274b1ad4ce19f16>

## **Scientific Viewpoint**

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### **Novavax Files for Conditional Marketing Authorization of COVID-19 Vaccine in Switzerland**

Novavax, Inc., a biotechnology company dedicated to developing and commercializing next-generation vaccines for serious infectious diseases, today announced its submission to Swissmedic, the Swiss Agency for Therapeutic Products, for conditional marketing authorization (CMA) of NVX-CoV2373, its recombinant nanoparticle protein-based COVID-19 vaccine candidate with Matrix-M™ adjuvant, for use in adults. "We remain committed to delivering our COVID-19 vaccine, built on a well-understood protein platform used in common vaccines for decades," said Stanley C. Erck, President and Chief Executive Officer, Novavax. "We look forward to Swissmedic's review and, if

authorized, delivering the vaccine to Switzerland to help fill the continued gap in vaccination and global distribution channels.”

<https://apnews.com/press-release/pr-newswire/coronavirus-pandemic-technology-business-health-clinical-trials-17bb530b6b29bf9e5e29c31cb968c1a9>

### **Pfizer and BioNTech to extend rolling submission for Covid-19 vaccine**

Pfizer and BioNTech are set to extend their rolling submission to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for amending the emergency use authorization (EUA) of the Covid-19 vaccine to include children aged six months to four years. Currently, the trial in children of this age group is underway and the results on the first two 3µg vaccine doses in these subjects are being submitted to the regulatory agency on an ongoing basis. The companies noted in December last year that the trial underway will analyse a third 3µg dose of the vaccine a minimum of two months following the second shot in subjects of this age. With the trial progressing rapidly, Pfizer and BioNTech intend to wait for the three-dose inoculation data as the companies anticipate it to offer an increased protection level in this age group of children.

<https://www.pharmaceutical-technology.com/news/pfizer-biontech-fda-vaccine/>

### **Novavax files for authorization of COVID-19 vaccine in Switzerland**

Novavax Inc has submitted an application to Switzerland's drugs regulator for the authorization of its COVID-19 vaccine in adults, the U.S. vaccine maker said on Monday. The submission is based on data from two key clinical trials in the United States and Mexico as well as in the UK that showed the vaccine was 90% effective against COVID-19.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/novavax-files-authorization-covid-19-vaccine-switzerland-2022-02-14/>

### **Three Covid vaccines give ‘substantial’ extra protection against serious illness compared to two doses**

Three jabs are better than two, according to a new study which finds that people are better protected against Covid after their booster than they are after their second dose. Researchers compared the protection conferred by second and third Pfizer jabs and found the boost gave a better defence against both infection and serious illness. Three doses gave 88 per cent protection against any kind of infection, from asymptomatic to very serious, rising to 97 per cent defence against hospitalisation during the first 3 months after vaccination. But unlike nine months ago, when the Delta variant was spreading through a mostly unvaccinated population, now millions of factory workers have been fully vaccinated and the Omicron variant is proving less severe, the government said. "The risk of widespread lockdowns is very low this year as Vietnam has successfully carried out its COVID-19 vaccination campaign," Dang Duc Anh, director of the National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology, told Reuters.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/science/covid-vaccine-pfizer-second-third-jabs-1459445>

### **Cancer computer models identify new drug combinations to treat Covid-19**

By adapting computer models originally developed to understand the biology of cancer cells, UCL researchers have identified new drug combinations with the potential to treat severe cases of Covid-19 infection at different stages of the disease. The findings could help lower the number of Covid-19 related deaths and reduce the strain on healthcare systems. Published in npj Digital Medicine, the study tested the potential impact of interfering with different aspects of SARS-CoV-2 infection and the body's responses to the virus. Results have identified existing therapeutics that might be suitable for treating Covid-19 patients. Although vaccines and treatments for Covid-19 now exist, additional effective and affordable treatments are still urgently required. Cases of SARS-CoV-2 infection are still highly likely to occur, particularly when new variants arise.

<https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/943345>

### **Pardes expects to start larger trial of COVID-19 antiviral pill by mid-year**

Pardes Biosciences Inc (PRDS.O) said on Monday it expects to start a mid-to-late-stage trial of its experimental COVID-19 antiviral pill by mid-year, following promising data from early human testing. Interim data from an ongoing early-stage trial has shown that a twice daily intake of the pill, PBI-0451, can trigger potent antiviral activity against SARS-CoV-2 and its emerging variants, Pardes said. The drug was well-tolerated and all adverse events reported so far have been assessed as mild in severity and resolved without intervention, the company added.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/pardes-expects-start-larger-trial-covid-19-antiviral-pill-by-mid-year-2022-02-14/>

### **Singapore grants interim approval for Novavax's COVID-19 vaccine**

Singapore's Health Sciences Authority (HSA) said on Monday it has granted an interim authorisation for Novavax's COVID-19 vaccine. The first batch of the Nuvaxovid vaccine is expected to arrive in Singapore in the next few months, the HSA said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/singapore-grants-interim-approval-novavaxs-covid-19-vaccine-2022-02-14/>

### **Moderna eyes UK for next leg of mRNA vaccine manufacturing journey: report**

Moderna has already seized domestic manufacturing opportunities in Canada, Australia and Africa. Now, the mRNA pioneer is setting its sights on the U.K.'s "Golden Triangle" for the next leg of its vaccine journey, the Financial Times reports. The company is in late-stage talks with the U.K. to invest in local research and manufacturing, the publication said Sunday. Under the deal, Moderna would also team up with the U.K.'s National Health Service (NHS) for clinical trial work, the FT added. The plan would see Moderna hire staffers to run clinical trials with the NHS, the FT says. Additionally, the biotech would help bolster the U.K.'s pandemic preparedness by building out a manufacturing facility that could swiftly pivot to tackle emerging health threats, the publication noted.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/manufacturing/moderna-eyes-uk-for-next-leg-mrna-vaccine-manufacturing-journey-report>

### **AstraZeneca pledges more Evusheld doses to US, bringing its antibody supply deal to \$855M**

A little more than a month after AstraZeneca sold the U.S. half a million doses of its COVID-19 antibody combo, the British drugmaker and U.S. officials are expanding their supply deal once more. AZ and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services have locked up an agreement for a total of 1 million additional doses of AstraZeneca's long-acting antibody cocktail Evusheld, also known as tixagevimab plus cilgavimab, the company said Monday. The deal includes the 500,000 doses the U.S. purchased in January plus an initial order for 700,000 Evusheld doses, which are already being administered around the country, AZ said. The latest tranche, unveiled Monday, covers the purchase of 500,00 doses by the U.S. government. The total value of the agreement for the manufacture, distribution and storage of Evusheld is \$855 million, an AstraZeneca spokesperson said over email. The U.S. has now locked up a total of 1.7 million doses from AZ.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/astrazeneca-pledges-1m-more-evusheld-doses-to-u-s-for-a-total-covid-deal-worth-855m>

## **Coronavirus Resurgence**

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### **Mainland China to help overwhelmed Hong Kong with COVID fight**

China will help Hong Kong to cope with an expanding COVID-19 outbreak by providing testing, treatment and quarantine capacity, Chief Secretary John Lee said on Saturday, adding that there were no plans for a mainland-style lockdown for now. Hong Kong and mainland China are among few places in the world still aiming to suppress every COVID-19 outbreak, but the Omicron variant has proven tough to keep under control. Lee, Health Secretary Sophia Chan and Security Chief Chris

Tang were part of a delegation who visited neighbouring Shenzhen on Friday and Saturday to discuss support measures with mainland Chinese officials.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/hong-kong-report-record-1510-covid-cases-saturday-tvb-2022-02-12/>

### **Hong Kong leader says fifth COVID wave has 'overwhelmed' city's capacity**

The latest wave of COVID-19 infections has "overwhelmed" Hong Kong, the city's leader said on Monday as daily cases surged by some 20 times over the past two weeks, leaving hospitals short of beds and struggling to cope. Carrie Lam, the head of the administration in the Chinese ruled city, issued a grim update for residents already subjected to tight restrictions on social gatherings as health authorities reported a record 2,071 infections on Monday, with 4,500 separate preliminary positive cases. "The onslaught of the fifth wave of the epidemic has dealt a heavy blow to Hong Kong and overwhelmed the city's capacity of handling," Lam said, adding patients were having to wait longer to access isolation facilities.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/hong-kong-leader-says-fifth-covid-wave-has-overwhelmed-citys-capacity-2022-02-14/>