

# Seqirus Media Monitoring

## 3rd Jun 2020

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### Seqirus mentions

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No News Recorded

### Industry News

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#### Is There a 'Baloxavir' for Coronavirus?

A new study has found that some influenza antivirals are useful for more than helping sick people get better — they also can prevent hundreds of thousands of virus cases if used in the early stages of infection. The study from researchers at The University of Texas at Austin published in the journal Nature Communications, focused on influenza and has implications for the coronavirus that causes COVID-19. By modeling the impact of a pair of leading flu drugs, the team found significant differences in effects between oseltamivir, an older antiviral treatment for flu that patients know by the name Tamiflu, and a newer one, baloxavir, which is sold under the brand name Xofluza.

<https://www.precisionvaccinations.com/ut-austin-research-says-covid-19-drug-development-could-benefit-influenza-therapeutic-approach>

Additional sources: ([Medical Xpress](#)) ([EurekAlert](#))

#### Modeling mitigation of influenza epidemics by baloxavir

Influenza viruses annually kill 290,000–650,000 people worldwide. Antivirals can reduce death tolls. Baloxavir, the recently approved influenza antiviral, inhibits initiation of viral mRNA synthesis, whereas oseltamivir, an older drug, inhibits release of virus progeny. Baloxavir blocks virus replication more rapidly and completely than oseltamivir, reducing the duration of infectiousness. Hence, early baloxavir treatment may indirectly prevent transmission. Here, we estimate impacts of ramping up and accelerating baloxavir treatment on population-level incidence using a new model that links viral load dynamics from clinical trial data to between-host transmission.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-020-16585-y>

#### The FDA should not rush a covid-19 vaccine

Steven Joffe and Holly Fernandez Lynch teach at the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine. They write: "Vaccines are widely expected to offer the best way out of the covid-19 pandemic. But they won't help unless they're safe and effective, making it essential that only rigorously tested approaches reach the public. Recent history suggests there is reason to be concerned." "Public trust in vaccines is another critical consideration. Already, the anti-vaccine movement has begun to sow doubt about a coronavirus vaccine. Even if an option ultimately proves to be safe and effective, it won't do much good if many people refuse it. And if a covid-19 vaccine causes harm, efforts to counter other vaccine-preventable diseases may be set back as well."

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/06/02/fda-should-not-rush-covid-19-vaccine/>

#### Russia's approval of antiviral drug Avifavir to treat COVID-19 good news for India, say scientists

Russia's approval of the antiviral drug Avifavir to treat COVID-19 is good news for India as it is based on an influenza medication already in advanced clinical trials there, say scientists. Avifavir, described by its developers in Russia as perhaps the most promising anti COVID-19 drug in the world, is derived from Favipiravir. Glenmark Pharmaceuticals announced last week that Favipiravir is under phase 3 clinical trials -- the penultimate stage in drug testing -- in India.

<https://www.timesnownews.com/health/article/russias-approval-of-antiviral-drug-avifavir-to-treat-covid19-good-news-for-india-say-scientists/600619>

## **Pandemic Influenza News**

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**No News Recorded**

## **Academic studies**

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### **The impact of climate and antigenic evolution on seasonal influenza virus epidemics in Australia**

Although seasonal influenza viruses circulate globally, prevention and treatment occur at the level of regions, cities, and communities. At these scales, the timing, duration and magnitude of epidemics vary substantially, but the underlying causes of this variation are poorly understood. Here, based on analyses of a 15-year city-level dataset of 18,250 laboratory-confirmed and antigenically-characterised influenza virus infections from Australia, we investigate the effects of previously hypothesised environmental and virological drivers of influenza epidemics.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-020-16545-6>

## **Pediatric influenza news**

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## **Over 65's influenza news**

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### **Weakened immune system leaves elderly prone to the virus**

According to the CDC, 8 out of every 10 COVID-19 deaths in the U.S. have occurred in adults age 65 and older. This age group also accounts for upward of 70 percent of all coronavirus hospitalizations nationwide. "The general line of thinking is that immunity falters with normal aging, just like our muscle mass and cognitive function," said Dr. Hal Scofield, a physician-scientist at OMRF. That waning immunity leaves older people more prone to serious complications not only from COVID-19 but from seasonal illnesses like the flu. Weakened immunity has also made the annual flu shot less effective in the elderly, with the CDC reporting that only 25 percent of people age 50 and older were protected during the 2018-19 flu season.

<https://oklahoman.com/article/5663649/weakened-immune-system-leaves-elderly-prone-to-the-virus>

## **General Influenza News**

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### **Belgium - Coronavirus: flu vaccination extra important this year**

Belgium's Superior Health Council has called on people in risk groups and health care workers to get vaccinated against the seasonal flu this year, in the context of the coronavirus crisis. In the context of the coronavirus pandemic, a vaccination against the flu is more important than ever to protect ourselves, but also to relieve the pressure on hospitals and general practitioners this winter, the Council said

<https://www.brusselstimes.com/all-news/belgium-all-news/114703/coronavirus-flu-vaccination-extra-important-this-year/>

### **Sweden - Flu vaccine shortage feared in wake of corona pandemic**

It's feared that a surge in demand for flu vaccines caused by the coronavirus pandemic could lead to a shortage of the jabs in Sweden. The local health authorities in Sörmland estimate they will need 5,000 additional vaccines when the next flu season comes around, while Stockholm also anticipates a greater demand

<https://sverigesradio.se/artikel/7486317>

**No proof Britain will be hit by a second Covid-19 wave and 'misleading models based on Spanish flu' should not guide UK policy on lifting the lockdown, says leading expert ...**

Professor Hugh Pennington, an emeritus microbiologist at University of Aberdeen, said the notion of a devastating second wave of coronavirus is based on outdated flu models. Almost all scientists agree the infection is bound to re-emerge in a second wave in the absence of a vaccine or cure for the coronavirus. The biggest fear is the second wave will occur during the winter and coincide with flu season, which could overwhelm already swamped hospitals. Dr Hans Kluge, director for the WHO European region, said he was 'very concerned' a surge in infections would coincide with other seasonal diseases such as the flu. Speaking in mid-May, he cautioned that now is the time for 'preparation, not celebration' across Europe - even if countries are showing positive signs of recovery.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8379469/No-proof-Britain-hit-second-Covid-19-wave.html>

### **USMC offers 200 free influenza vaccination to frontliners**

University Malaya Specialist Centre, as part of its corporate social responsibility initiative, is providing 200 free influenza vaccination to Foodpanda riders and the Make It Right Movement community team. USMC medical director and interim chief executive officer Prof Dr Vicknes Waran said the vaccination awareness campaign aims to educate the general population on the importance of the vaccine.

<https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2020/06/02/usmc-offers-200-free-influenza-vaccination-to-frontliners/1871837>

### **Severe flu alert as coronavirus weakens medical systems**

In Hong Kong, social distancing and hygiene measures against the new coronavirus have proven effective against influenza, shortening the 2019-2020 flu season, according to data from the University of Hong Kong. Benjamin Cowling, a professor of epidemiology and biostatistics, and his colleagues studied the transmission of influenza in Hong Kong during the last 2019-2020 flu season. They found that social distancing measures and changes in the public's behaviour such as wearing face masks, helped to reduce influenza transmission in the community by 44 per cent

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/3087032/severe-flu-alert-coronavirus-weakens-medical-systems>

### **By the numbers, Covid-19 was never 'like the flu'**

"Public officials continue to draw comparisons between seasonal influenza and SARS-CoV-2 mortality, often in an attempt to minimise the effects of the unfolding pandemic," wrote Dr Jeremy Faust, of Harvard Medical School, and Dr Carlos del Rio, of Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta. But those comparisons are "apples and oranges", the physicians reported in an article published on 14 May in the journal JAMA Internal Medicine. That's because the numbers comparing Covid-19 and flu just don't match up.

<https://www.health24.com/Medical/Infectious-diseases/Coronavirus/by-the-numbers-covid-19-was-never-like-the-flu-20200514>

### **27% unlikely to be vaccinated; Republicans, conservatives especially: POLL**

Unpersuaded by more than 100,000 pandemic deaths in the U.S., 45% of strong conservatives, four in 10 Republicans and nearly as many evangelical Christians say they'd be unlikely to get vaccinated against the coronavirus, even for free. Overall, 27% of adults in an ABC News/Washington Post poll say they definitely (15%) or probably (12%) would not get the vaccine. Among them, half say they don't trust vaccines in general, while nearly a quarter don't think it's needed in this case. A plurality definitely would get vaccinated (43%) and 28% say they probably would. The net, 71%, is much higher than the adult vaccination rate for the standard seasonal flu - 45% in the 2018-19 flu season

<https://abc11.com/2725-unlikely-to-be-vaccinated;-republicans-conservatives-especially-poll/6226619/>

## **Burden of disease**

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### **How Deadly Was the 2019-2020 Flu Season?**

Preliminary data suggests there were an estimated 24,000-62,000 flu deaths for the 2019-20

influenza season, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. However, due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, these numbers may be higher than normal for this time of year. The season-ending estimates for the flu may eventually be adjusted once complete and finalized data becomes available for the season, the CDC explained. Their data also showed an estimate of between 39-56 million flu illnesses, 18-26 million medical flu visits, and between 410,000-740,000 flu hospitalizations. The week of April 4 was the last week of in-season reporting for flu data.

<https://www.contagionlive.com/news/how-deadly-was-the-2019-2020-flu-season>

### **Christopher Labos: COVID-19 vs. the flu: no need to pick sides**

Christopher Labos is a Montreal doctor and an associate with the McGill Office for Science and Society. He writes: "Even though most people do recover, both the flu and COVID-19 have killed thousands of people this year. Come fall, both are likely to return and kill thousands more. What happened in New York City showed us how bad it could have been. The point is we did not overreact to the COVID-19. We just under-react to the flu. Thousands of deaths per year is not something we should be accepting lightly."

<https://www.msn.com/en-ca/news/other/christopher-labos-covid-19-vs-the-flu-no-need-to-pick-sides/ar-BB14W06x>

*Additional sources: ([The Province](#))*

## **Flu Surveillance in Animals**

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**No News Recorded**