# COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

4th Jan 2021

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## News Highlights

### Delaying a second dose: A controversial move?

The UK's approach of delaying a second dose of a Covid-19 vaccine has been criticised as risky. The UK said it would space out doses of its two approved vaccines against Covid-19 by up to twelve weeks, versus the three to four week period the manufacturers propose from their studied clinical trials. Spacing the two shots for an extended period diminishes the effectiveness of the first shot, reducing the degree of cover until the second shot can be given.

### Continued criticism over U.S. vaccine plan

The U.S. goal of vaccinating twenty million people by the end of 2020 was not hit. Roughly 13.5% of this target was met by year end, with some 2.7m people having been vaccinated by Wednesday of last week. As 2021 starts, state officials are reported to be 'scrambling' in their efforts to scale up their Covid-19 vaccination campaign amid the earlier shortfall. By January 1st, just 2.8 million of the 12.4 million doses delivered to the states had been administered.

### India approves AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine as national trial of vaccination programme begins

India commenced a national trial of its Covid immunisation programme on Saturday in the wake of regulatory bodies reportedly approving the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine for emergency use. The mammoth task of vaccinating 1.3 billion people will include a first phase seeking to inculate 300 million Indians, prioritising those over fifty and/or with comorbidities, frontline workers, and police and military personnel.

### Could we detect Covid-19 with a brethalyser?

Scientists in Indonesia have unveiled a GeNose C-19 device, a breathalyser test kit which they claim can detect Covid-19 in under two minutes. The Indonesian government gave the greenlight for distribution of the device, which researchers say can analyse elements unique to Covid-19 in a breath sample. The government hopes this new method can help to ramp up testing and screening.

## Lockdown Exit

**Parents face week of uncertainty over school reopenings in England**

Parents face more disruption and uncertainty as local authorities across the country scramble to delay schools reopening in the face of rising coronavirus infection rates and the UK prime minister, Boris Johnson, admitted that more could be shut in the coming weeks. On the day before millions of children were set to return to their classrooms, Essex council said it would unilaterally close schools to most pupils until at least Wednesday and Kent county council joined England’s largest education authority in Birmingham in asking the education secretary to allow primaries to stay closed. They said the argument for reopening amid high infection rates “does not stack up”.

https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/jan/03/parents-face-week-of-uncertainty-over-school-reopenings-in-england

**UK public transport downturn to continue after pandemic ends**

Over half of public transport users in the UK say they will continue to avoid buses and trains after the pandemic is over in favour of cycling or walking, a study of consumer spending reveals. The Co-op's annual ethical consumerism report, which has monitored ethical spending habits for over 20 years, this year singles out public transport as "the biggest loser" of changed spending priorities due to Covid-19, with users reluctant to jump back onto buses and trains because of the threat to their personal space. In other sectors, the study found that the "stay at or near home" culture which has led to a boom in online shopping and home deliveries is likely to stay, with 58% of shoppers determined to continue to support their local high street.

https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/dec/30/uk-public-transport-downturn-to-continue-after-pandemic-ends

**Voice of the Mirror: Government must ensure the rollout of new Covid jab is efficient and fast**

Our despair at the rising tide of Covid cases is at long last tinged with hope. The green light for the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine in such a short time is a tribute to the brilliance and ingenuity of our scientists. It is now imperative that the Government ensures the rollout is efficient and fast. Vaccination can save lives, reunite families and start to get life back to normal. So the approval of a second vaccine could not have come at a more needed time.

https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/voice-mirror-government-must-ensure-23242268

**A new year brings same problems with delayed vaccine distribution**

The Trump administration enters 2021 well short of its goal to vaccinate 20 million people by January 1, leaving state health officials across the country scrambling to ramp up a massive vaccine distribution effort that is crucial to defeating the pandemic and yet faces critical delays. So far, just over 12.4 million doses have been distributed to states, yet only 2.8 million doses have actually been administered, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Some states have expressed disappointment with the rollout, acknowledging their own issues but also seeking more federal resources amid concerns about the burden they now have to get vaccines into patients' arms. In several cases, local snafus on the ground have created their own delays, not to mention dangerous and costly mistakes. In West Virginia, for instance, 42 people were mistakenly given a Covid-19 antibody treatment instead of the coronavirus vaccine, according to the West Virginia National Guard. In Wisconsin, police have arrested a recently fired pharmacist who they say removed 57 vials of the Moderna vaccine from a local hospital's refrigerator and left them to sit out, leading to 500 doses being discarded.

https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/01/politics/states-struggle-chaos-vaccine-distribution-warp-speed/index.html

**Coronavirus in Ireland: Sluggish vaccine programme will hurt high street, sector warns**

A retail group has expressed concern that a slow rollout of the Covid-19 vaccine in Ireland will lead to long-term closures for non-essential retail.Retail Excellence Ireland (REI), an industry group

https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/ireland/coronavirus-in-ireland-sluggish-vaccine-programme-will-hurt-high-street-sector-warns-j37n0nl8j

**'Vaccine diplomacy' sees Egypt roll out Chinese coronavirus jab**

When Egypt's health ministry sent out an invitation to doctors to be vaccinated against Covid-19, they neglected to make clear it was a clinical trial. Instead, it assured them that two Covid-19 vaccines developed by China's National Biotec Group, part of a state-owned conglomerate known as Sinopharm, had no side-effects and that "the minister of health was vaccinated today, and orders were issued to vaccinate all doctors and workers who wish to be vaccinated". Many were sceptical. "When my colleagues and I got that message, none of us participated, as we cannot trust it," said one worker at a state hospital, who said there was a "lack of credibility" in the government's approach to the pandemic and the vaccines. The doctor, who cannot be named to protect their

safety, described Egypt's extensive publicity campaign around the vaccines, featuring a well-known actor driving to a sunlit clinic to get his jab, as "government propaganda intended to boost people's morale".
https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/dec/30/vaccine-diplomacy-sees-egypt-roll-out-chinese-coronavirus-jab

**Will I need a coronavirus vaccine to fly or travel in 2021? – Which? News**
Qantas has said COVID-19 inoculation will be mandatory when it restarts international flights, with some other airlines and destinations likely to follow suit
https://www.which.co.uk/news/2020/12/will-i-need-a-coronavirus-vaccine-to-fly-or-travel-in-2021/

**Oxford AstraZeneca Coronavirus vaccine: What does approval mean for Scotland?**
This development has been welcomed by many in Scotland, with First Minister Nicola Sturgeon calling it "much needed good news" and adding that "spring will bring better times". The approval of the Oxford AstraZeneca candidate is fundamental to Scotland's vaccine rollout, as it will be the one received by the majority of Scots.
https://www.scotsman.com/health/oxford-astrazeneca-coronavirus-vaccine-what-does-approval-mean-scotland-3081170

## Exit Strategies

**Coronavirus: Medics complain of 'bureaucracy' in bid to join Covid vaccine effort**
When dentist Andy Bates offered to help administer the coronavirus vaccine, he hadn't bargained for the "overload of bureaucracy" he says came his way. Dr Bates, from North Yorkshire, is one of a number of health staff to criticise the paperwork needed to gain NHS approval to give the jabs. Some medics have been asked for proof they are trained in areas such as preventing radicalisation. The PM said the health secretary would be "taking steps" to address the issue. Asked about reports potential volunteers were being deterred by the additional training and forms about "de-radicalisation measures" and "fire drills", Mr Johnson told the BBC's Andrew Marr on Sunday: "I think it's absurd and I know that the health secretary is taking steps to get rid of that pointless bureaucracy."
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55516277

**Britain targets tens of millions of vaccinations in next three months**
Britain will have 530,000 doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine ready to administer on Monday and hopes to provide "tens of millions" of vaccinations over the next three months, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Sunday. "We do hope that ... we'll be able to do tens of millions in the course of the next three months," he told the BBC.
https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-britain-vaccine-idUKKBN29808Q?taid=5ff1a4eae9b1eb00011df232&utm_campaign=trueAnthem:+Trending+Content&utm_medium=trueAnthem&utm_source=twitter

**Vaccine passports, travel bubbles, pricey flights: the future of Asian tourism?**
The coronavirus has changed the industry, forcing companies and countries alike to pivot from their existing models in a region where tourism is a huge economic driver. But catering to local travellers cannot fully make up for the downturn, experts say, while changing appetites and abundant concerns mean the future is anything but certain
https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/economics/article/3116142/vaccine-passports-domestic-tourism-pricey-flights-future-travel

**Thailand bans food and magazines on domestic flights in bid to stop spread of coronavirus**
Thailand has banned food and drink services and magazines on domestic flights. Airlines who do not follow the new regulations face a penalty from the regulator. It marks the second time the ban has

come into force during the pandemic
https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9104301/Thailand-bans-food-magazines-domestic-flights-bid-stop-spread-coronavirus.html

**India tests vaccine delivery system with nationwide trial**
India tested its COVID-19 vaccine delivery system with a nationwide trial on Saturday as it prepares to roll out an inoculation program to stem the coronavirus pandemic. The trial included data entry into an online platform for monitoring vaccine delivery, along with testing of cold storage and transportation arrangements for the vaccine, the health ministry said in a statement. The massive exercise came a day after a government-appointed panel of experts held a meeting to review the applications of potential vaccine candidates, including front-runner Covishield, developed by Oxford University and U.K.-based drugmaker AstraZeneca. India's vaccination drive is expected to start in a few days once the country's regulator approves a vaccine.
https://www.independent.co.uk/news/india-tests-vaccine-delivery-system-with-nationwide-trial-vaccine-coronavirus-pandemic-vaccine-covid-new-delhi-b1781435.html?utm_content=Echobox&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1609579411

**Coronavirus: UK sets up more than 20 Covid test sites for France-bound hauliers**
More than 20 new coronavirus testing centres for hauliers driving to France are being set up in the next few days, the transport secretary has announced. Grant Shapps said that 10 sites opened on Saturday, with a further 10 to come on Sunday, and more to be added in the week. The government is also offering help to firms that wish to set up testing centres on their own premises. Free testing kits will be available to companies as part of the scheme. The move comes after France shut its border to UK arrivals - including freight drivers - last month, amid concern over a new fast-spreading variant of coronavirus identified in the UK. It led to thousands of lorry drivers being stuck in Kent as they waited to cross the English Channel, with some clashing with police after spending days in their cabs.
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55516285

**LA begins issuing digital vaccine verification for Apple Wallet**
LA will begin offering the digital receipts for vaccination starting this week. Plan is being carried out in partnership with tech company Healthvana. It's initially aimed at ensuring people get the correct second dose of vaccine. But critics fear a looming system of 'vaccine passports' required for travel. Raises questions about civil rights and people with immunity after infection
https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9100029/LA-begins-issuing-digital-vaccine-verification-Apple-Wallet.html

**Nearly 100,000 Scots receive first covid vaccine shot as new jab to be rolled out on Monday**
Nearly 100,000 people in Scotland have received their first shot of a coronavirus vaccine. First Minister Nicola Sturgeon revealed the number as she confirmed a second vaccine, which could be the key to restoring relative normality to people's lives, will be rolled out from Monday. Sturgeon said a change in the process would result in "more people" getting vaccinated "more quickly". Regulators recently approved the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, which is administered in two doses weeks apart. It was also confirmed today that the separate Oxford/Astra Zeneca product has been approved.
https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/nearly-100000-scots-receive-first-23239311

**Covid: 'NHS staff need vaccine first' as pressures mount**
Healthcare workers should be given the Covid vaccine before elderly people to ease pressure on hospitals and surgeries, a GP has said. Dr Phil White, who is chairman of the Welsh GPs Committee, said the new coronavirus variant had led to a rise in staff sickness and isolating. Public Health Wales has warned the NHS is under unprecedented pressure and the British Medical Association (BMA)

described the situation as "dire". About 30,000 people have had the jab. It comes as figures put Wales behind other nations for the number of people being vaccinated. The Welsh Government said front-line NHS staff were among the very first groups to receive the vaccine.
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-55478409

**Covid Vaccine: NHS Staff Struggle To Get Jab In Echo Of PPE Shambles**
Vaccines made by Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford/AstraZeneca are being rolled out – but health workers are still being left at risk.
https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/nhs-staff-coronavirus-vaccine-ppe-shambles_uk_5fec3877c5b66809cb357a17?ncid=tweetlnkukhpmg00000001

**Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine rollout plan changed following approval**
Millions of people across the UK at risk from Covid will be offered a single first dose of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, with a booster jab within three months, in a bid to return the country to some normality by the spring, the prime minister has said. Rollout of the Oxford vaccine will begin on 4 January following its approval for emergency use by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Authority (MHRA). The government hopes the vaccine, of which it has ordered 100m doses, will transform prospects in the UK and check the spread of the rampaging coronavirus variant which has caused cases to surge. Pharmacies as well as GPs will be able to give the jabs to those at risk.
https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/dec/30/oxford-astrazeneca-covid-vaccine-approved-by-uk-regulator

## Partisan Exits

**Tony Blair says UK should target five million vaccinations a week to get the country out of lockdown**
The UK should be aiming to administer five million Covid-19 vaccinations a week, Tony Blair has said. Mr Blair urged ministers to change “completely” the UK’s strategy in tackling the virus and said the vaccination programme needed to be beefed up “very, very fast” if we are to avoid remaining in a “severe lockdown”. Since the rollout of the Pfizer/BioNTech jab nearly a month ago more than one million people in the UK have received their first dose of the vaccine. The rollout of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine begins on Monday.
https://inews.co.uk/news/health/coronavirus-tony-blair-five-million-vaccinations-weekly-uk-815720

**Schools are safe, say PM Johnson as COVID-19 cases surge**
British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Sunday tougher lockdown restrictions were probably on the way as COVID-19 cases keep rising, but that schools were safe and children should continue to attend where permitted. COVID-19 cases in Britain are at record levels and the increase in numbers is fuelled by a new and more transmissible variant of the virus. The government has cancelled the planned reopening of schools in and around London but teaching unions want wider closures.
https://uk.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-britain/schools-are-safe-say-uk-pm-johnson-as-covid-19-cases-surge-idUSKBN29808O

**Pope criticises people going on holiday to flee COVID lockdowns**
Pope Francis condemned on Sunday people who had gone abroad on holiday to escape coronavirus lockdowns, saying they needed to show greater awareness of the suffering of others. Speaking after his weekly noon blessing, Francis said he had read newspaper reports of people catching flights to flee government curbs and seek fun elsewhere. “They didn’t think about those who were staying at home, of the economic problems of many people who have been hit hard by the lockdown, of the sick people. (They thought) only about going on holiday and having fun,” the pope said. “This really saddened me,” he said in a video address
https://uk.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-pope/pope-criticises-people-going-on-holiday-to-flee-covid-lockdown

s-idUKKBN2980BT

**World Faces Covid-19 “Vaccine Apartheid”**
Argentina, South Africa, Brazil, and Turkey will have to be satisfied with Pfizer’s gratitude, because (like most countries in the world) they won’t be receiving enough of the vaccine to inoculate their populations, at least not anytime soon. Meanwhile, the U.S. and Germany — along with Canada and the rest of the European Union — have contracted for enough doses of various Covid-19 vaccines to inoculate their populations several times over.
https://theintercept.com/2020/12/31/covid-vaccine-countries-scarcity-access/

**Dr. Fauci advises against the British approach of delaying a second dose of vaccine**
Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, the nation’s top infectious disease expert, told CNN on Friday that the United States would not follow Britain’s lead in front-loading first vaccine injections, potentially delaying the administration of second doses. Britain announced a plan this week to delay second shots of its two authorized vaccines, developed by Pfizer and AstraZeneca, in an attempt to dole out to more people the partial protection conferred by a single dose. “I would not be in favor of that,” Dr. Fauci told CNN’s Elizabeth Cohen, regarding altering dosing schedules for the vaccines authorized for use in the United States, made by Pfizer and Moderna. “We’re going to keep doing what we’re doing.”
https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/01/world/dr-fauci-advises-against-the-british-approach-of-delaying-a-second-dose-of-vaccine.html

**Romney: Lack of comprehensive vaccine distribution plan is 'inexcusable' | TheHill**
Sen. Mitt Romney (R-Utah) slammed federal distribution of the coronavirus vaccine on Friday, calling the lack of a comprehensive strategy “inexcusable.” Romney called the unprecedented rapid vaccine development “a tribute to the [National Institutes of Health], the [Food and Drug Administration] and to the professionals in the pharmaceutical industry.” However, he said, “unlike the development of the vaccines, the vaccination process itself is falling behind. It was unrealistic to assume that the health care workers already overburdened with COVID care could take on a massive vaccination program. So too is the claim that CVS and Walgreens will save the day: they don’t have excess personnel available to inoculate millions of Americans.”
https://thehill.com/homenews/senate/532309-romney-lack-of-comprehensive-vaccine-distribution-plan-is-inexcusable

**Covid-19 in Scotland: All Scots over 50 will receive vaccine by the spring**
All Scots over the age of 50 will receive the coronavirus vaccine by the spring, the health secretary has promised. The first doses of the Oxford University-Astrazeneca shot will be administered from Monday. Jeane Freeman said that initially the injections would be given in a supervised setting near hospitals but would then move to GP surgeries and community hubs
https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/scotland/covid-19-in-scotland-all-scots-over-50-will-receive-vaccine-by-the-spring-6g0d9rwxn

**Some Doctors in Britain Plan to Defy Instructions to Delay Vaccine Booster Shots**
Some family doctors in Britain said on Thursday that they would defy the government’s instructions to postpone patients’ appointments for a second dose of coronavirus vaccine, a signal of unease in the medical community over Britain’s new plan to delay second shots as a way of giving more people the partial protection of a single dose. British doctors, who have been instructed to begin rescheduling second-dose appointments that had been set for next week, said they were loath to ask older, vulnerable patients to wait an extra two months for their booster shots of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. They said those patients had been counting on having the full protection of two doses, had already arranged for caregivers to help them get to their doctors’ offices, and could ill afford to rely on a new and untested vaccination strategy.
https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/31/world/uk-britain-covid-coronavirus.html

**Sluggish Covid-19 vaccine campaign raises spectre of US dysfunction; states rewriting priorities**

US health officials acknowledged that a Covid-19 immunisation campaign is crawling out of the starting gate, raising the prospect that the nation's all-in bet on vaccines could be afflicted by the same dysfunction that hobbled other measures to contain the pandemic. Only about 2.7 million Americans had been vaccinated as of Wednesday evening (Dec 30) in New York, according to Bloomberg's vaccine tracker. With one day remaining in the year, that represented roughly 13.5 per cent of the US's stated goal of immunising 20 million Americans by the end of 2020 - a number already repeatedly reduced.

https://www.straitstimes.com/world/united-states/sluggish-vaccine-campaign-raises-spectre-of-us-dysfunction-states-rewriting

**Some think Moderna VIPS may cut the line to get scarce Covid-19 vaccine**

When biotech company Moderna announced Tuesday that it planned to offer its workforce a chance to get vaccinated with its recently authorized Covid-19 vaccine, their decision raised some eyebrows. In addition to employees, the company said it would offer shots to its board members and the “adult household members of our team.” Moderna’s decision calls into question whether there are loopholes that will allow some people to cut the proverbial line to get their shot. “What it appears to be is, privilege and power gaining priority access to the vaccine,” said Dr. William Moss, executive director of the International Vaccine Access Center at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Nancy Berlinger, a research scholar at The Hastings Center, a nonprofit think tank, agreed. “It’s a rather problematic example that [the vaccine] is going to go to the VIPs first rather than to rank and file. You can imagine people are watching this pretty closely,” she said.

https://kyma.com/dsw-living/health/2020/12/30/some-think-moderna-vips-may-cut-the-line-to-get-scarce-covid-19-vaccine/

**Questions over Britain's decision to drop two-dose vaccine regimen**

Pfizer warned today there is 'no data' to show a single dose of its coronavirus vaccine provides long-term protection, after the UK scrapped its original jab rollout plan. The UK medical regulator is now recommending Covid jabs are given in two doses three months apart, rather than over the intended four-week period, to allow millions more people to be immunised over a shorter time period. But Pfizer said there was 'no data' in its studies to show its vaccine protects against Covid when taken 12 weeks apart. In a thinly-veiled swipe at the UK, the US firm warned that any 'alternative' dosing regimens should be closely monitored by health authorities. 'Data from the phase three study demonstrated that, although partial protection from the vaccine appears to begin as early as 12 days after the first dose, two doses of the vaccine are required to provide the maximum protection against the disease, a vaccine efficacy of 95 per cent,' Pfizer said in a statement. 'There are no data to demonstrate that protection after the first dose is sustained after 21 days.'

https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9099049/amp/Questions-Britains-decision-drop-two-dose-vaccine-regimen.html

**Israel leads the world in vaccination drive with 7% getting a dose**

Israel has already given a dose of the vaccine to 644,000 of its 8.7million people Bahrain is second in the per-capita table, followed by the UK, US and Canada UK today became the first in the world to approve the Oxford/AstraZeneca shot

https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9098465/Israel-leads-world-vaccination-drive-7-getting-dose.html

**Operation Warp Speed chief says Covid vaccine distribution 'should be better' as U.S. misses goal**

The United States will not inoculate as many people against the coronavirus as it had originally hoped for by the end of this year, Moncef Slaoui, chief advisor of Operation Warp Speed, said. There

are now more than 14 million doses of vaccine distributed across the U.S., the operations logistics chief said. That's far short of the original goal of injecting at least 20 million Americans with their first shots before the end of the year.
https://www.cnbc.com/2020/12/30/covid-vaccine-operation-warp-speed-chief-says-distribution-should-be-better-.html

**Covid vaccine scam: Fake NHS appointment texts are being used by scammers to con people out of money**
Elderly people and other vulnerable Brits have been warned to be on the lookout for a cruel coronavirus phone scam that steals their cash. Fraudsters are taking advantage of the NHS Covid-19 vaccine rollout by sending convincing text messages to scam financial information.
https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/13595300/fake-nhs-covid-vaccine-appointment-texts-scam/

## Continued Lockdown

**Germany poised to extend coronavirus lockdown**
Germany is likely to extend a national lockdown beyond Jan. 10 to curb coronavirus infection rates that are still running high and putting huge strains on hospitals and health workers, politicians said at the weekend. Chancellor Angela Merkel and regional leaders are expected to agree to extend the restrictions when they convene on Tuesday. It is not yet clear how long the extension would last. "The numbers are still too high, so we will have to prolong the restrictions," Health Minister Jens Spahn told RTL television
https://uk.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-germany-idUKKBN2980BF

**COVID-19: The U-turns and mixed messages of the government's schools policy**
The first primary school return: Education Secretary Gavin Williamson initially set out plans for all primary-age children to return to school for at least four weeks before the summer break. But on 9 June he said he had "no choice" but to change his mind, amid concerns that the two-metre social distancing rule would make a full return impossible. School meals for disadvantaged children: The government did not intend to keep the free school meals available during the holidays. But England footballer Marcus Rashford, himself a recipient of the meals as a child, led a campaign which saw councils and local restaurants and other food outlets step up to provide meals for children who needed them.
https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-the-u-turns-and-mixed-messages-of-the-governments-schools-policy-12177150

**Covid: All London primary schools to stay closed**
All primary schools in London will remain closed for the start of the new term, the government has confirmed. London mayor Sadiq Khan said the government had "finally seen sense and U-turned" on its plan to allow pupils in some areas to return on Monday. Leaders of nine London local authorities had written to Education Secretary Gavin Williamson urging him to rethink the decision. Mr Williamson said the city-wide closures were "a last resort". The government said it had decided all primary schools in the capital would be required to provide remote learning after a further review of coronavirus transmission rates. Vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers will continue to attend school, the government said.
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-55511169

**Yorkshire theatres reflect on a tough year - but the show must go on in 2021**
It has been a tough year for our theatres but, as Nick Ahad reports, the energy and verve with which they have reacted, plus the public's support, gives hope for the future.
https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/people/yorkshire-theatres-reflect-tough-year-show-must-go-2021-3076081

## Scientific Viewpoint

**Timeline: India's coronavirus vaccine approved by drugs experts**

India’s drugs regulator on Saturday recommended for emergency use a locally developed coronavirus vaccine called COVAXIN, which is expected to be a backup to the AstraZeneca/Oxford shot. Not much is known about the safety and efficacy of COVAXIN. The company says it has submitted all data to the drugs regulator. The head of India’s drugs regulator is expected to share details about it at a news conference on Sunday, when its formal approval is likely to be announced.
https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-india-covaxin-timelin-idUSKBN29801B?taid=5ff12d5b3ec0900001eb334d&utm_campaign=trueAnthem:+Trending+Content&utm_medium=trueAnthem&utm_source=twitter

**Wuhan: nearly 490,000 people could have had Covid, study finds**

A Chinese study of coronavirus antibodies has found almost half a million people may have had Covid-19 in Wuhan, a number that is 10 times the official figure. According to the study of antibody prevalence, the infection rate was also far higher in Wuhan than surrounding areas, suggesting the virus had been well contained in the city where the outbreak first began. The study, conducted by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), tested for antibodies in blood serum samples from around 34,000 people in Wuhan and other Hubei province cities, as well as the cities of Beijing and Shanghai and the provinces of Guangdong, Jiangsu, Sichuan and Liaoning.
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/30/wuhan-nearly-490000-people-could-have-had-covid-study-finds

**India's drug regulator approves AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine: sources**

India’s drug regulator on Friday approved a coronavirus vaccine developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University for emergency use, two sources with knowledge of the matter told Reuters. The decision clears the vaccine’s rollout in the world’s second-most populous country which, after the United States, has the highest number of COVID-19 infections. India wants to start administering the vaccine soon, most likely by Wednesday, said one of the sources, both of whom declined to be named ahead of an official announcement expected later in the day.
https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-india-vaccine-idUSKBN2962CN

**Pfizer and BioNTech to offer COVID vaccine to volunteers who got placebo**

Pfizer Inc and its partner BioNTech Se plan to give volunteers who received a placebo in its COVID-19 vaccine trial an option to receive a first dose of the vaccine by March 1, 2021, while staying within the study. The trial's Vaccine Transition Option allows all participants aged 16 or older the choice to discover whether they were given the placebo, "and for participants who learn they received the placebo, to have the option to receive the investigational vaccine while staying in the study," the companies said on their website here for trial participants. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration and a panel of its outside advisers have expressed concerns over Pfizer’s “unblinding” plan, saying it could make it harder to continue collecting data on safety and effectiveness needed to win full FDA approval of the vaccine.
https://uk.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-vaccine-unblinding/pfizer-and-biontech-to-offer-covid-vaccine-to-volunteers-who-got-placebo-idUKL4N2JC0BW

**Russia ready to trial combined AstraZeneca, Sputnik V vaccine in Ukraine**

Russia is ready to conduct clinical trials in Ukraine of a COVID-19 vaccine combining its Sputnik V with a vaccine developed by AstraZeneca together with Oxford University, the head of Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) said on Saturday. Russia’s sovereign RDIF, which is marketing the Sputnik V vaccine abroad, announced in December trials to test a combination of the AstraZeneca vaccine with the Sputnik V shot to see if this can boost the efficacy of the British drugmaker’s vaccine.
https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-russia-ukraine-idUKKBN2970JS?taid=5ff10a31e9b1eb00011df05b&utm_campaign=trueAnthem:+Trending+Content&utm_medium=trueAnthem&utm_source=twitter

**1.8 mln doses of Sinovac COVID-19 vaccine arrive in Indonesia**

A total of 1.8 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine made by the Chinese biopharmaceutical company

Sinovac Biotech arrived in Indonesia on Thursday, according to Indonesian government officials. Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi said this is the second batch of the Sinovac vaccine delivery for Indonesia, and the first batch of 1.2 million doses arrived on Dec. 6. "With this arrival, it means that there are already 3 million doses of Sinovac vaccine in Indonesia," Marsudi told a virtual press conference. Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin said vaccination is one of Indonesia's main strategies to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, adding, "It would take more than 12 months to complete the vaccination program, so we always keep up to health protocols."
http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-01/01/c_139633978.htm

**No approval for Covaxin, expert panel seeks more data from Bharat Biotech**

The Subject Expert Committee of the Central Drug Standard Control Organization on Friday has held that the data provided by Bharat Biotech for its coronavirus vaccine 'Covaxin' is not sufficient for granting it emergency use approval and has asked the company to provide more information
https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/no-approval-for-covaxin-expert-panel-seeks-more-data-from-bharat-biotech/articleshow/80063237.cms

**Could a breathalyser help detect COVID-19? Indonesian scientists say they've developed one**

Indonesian scientists have developed a simple breathalyser test that they say can electronically "smell' coronavirus and detect infection in under two minutes. The GeNose C-19 device uses artificial intelligence — in the form of an electronic nose — to analyse a breath sample and identify elements that are unique to COVID-19. The Indonesian Government last week granted a distribution permit for GeNose and hopes to roll out thousands of the devices by February. The aim is that this will increase mass testing of coronavirus at hospitals, airports, seaports and other public places in the world's fourth most populous country.
https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-01-02/indonesia-to-use-breathalysers-to-help-detect-covid-19/13019744

**Pfizer and BioNTech speed up timeline for offering Covid-19 vaccine to placebo volunteers**

Pfizer and its partner BioNTech plan to offer their Covid-19 vaccine to any clinical trial volunteer who received placebo by March 1, several months earlier than initially planned. The decision represents the conclusion of a complex and public kabuki dance between the FDA, Pfizer, and vaccine volunteers, as well as with Moderna, which developed its own Covid-19 vaccine. The FDA and its advisers pushed hard for volunteers to remain on placebo as long as possible to gather more safety and efficacy data about the vaccines, while the companies argued volunteers should receive the vaccines sooner for both ethical and practical reasons.
https://www.statnews.com/2021/01/01/pfizer-and-biontech-speed-up-timeline-for-offering-covid-19-to-placebo-volunteers/

**Indian regulators are pushed to release Covid-19 vaccine trial protocol**

As Indian regulators consider emergency approval of a Covid-19 vaccine from the Serum Institute of India, consumer groups are urging authorities to release key documents amid concerns over transparency and adverse events. An independent panel of experts set by the Drug Controller General of India meets on Friday to consider the vaccine, which is the Serum Institute’s version of a shot originally co-developed by AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford. Consumer advocates, however, maintain Indian regulators should disclose more details before proceeding, especially since the Indian Council of Medical Research is providing support for a so-called bridging trial that is being conducted in the Indian population. Consumer groups are concerned that it is not clear whether the Serum Institute has submitted all safety and immunogenicity data from analyses of the bridging study to regulators
https://www.statnews.com/pharmalot/2021/01/01/india-covid19-vaccine-serum-trial-protocol/

**Covid vaccine shortages will last months, Chris Whitty says**

Vaccine shortages will be a problem for months, England's chief medical officer warned last night as the government faced a revolt by GPs over cancelled second jabs for elderly patients. Chris Whitty and his counterparts from the other home nations made clear that struggles to get hold of supplies were likely to be the main reason why more people could not be vaccinated, and he defended a shift towards giving first doses. "Vaccine shortage is a reality that cannot be wished away," he said in a letter to doctors. In England 786,000 people have had a first dose of the Pfizer vaccine, with 264,406 jabs in Christmas week. In the UK the total is 944,539.

https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/gps-rebel-over-order-to-delay-second-jabs-xsg6qxzcp?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1609489632

**BioNTech founders warn of vaccine supply gaps - Spiegel**

BioNTech is working flat out with partner Pfizer to boost production of their COVID-19 vaccine, its founders said, warning there would be gaps in supply until other vaccines were rolled out. The German biotech startup has led the vaccine race but its shot has been slow to arrive in the European Union because of relatively late approval from the bloc's health regulator and the small size of the order placed by Brussels. The delays in rolling out the home-grown vaccine have caused consternation in Germany, where some regions had to halt vaccinations within days of starting an inoculation drive.

https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-vaccines-biontech/biontech-founders-warn-of-vaccine-supply-gaps-spiegel-idUKKBN29627M

**Different efficacy data for Chinese COVID-19 vaccine 'real and valid' - media**

Different efficacy results for a Chinese COVID-19 vaccine released separately in China and in United Arab Emirates are both real and valid, an executive at China National Biotec Group (CNBG) told state media. China approved its first COVID-19 vaccine for general public use on Thursday, a shot developed by an affiliate to state-backed Sinopharm, after the developer said the vaccine showed 79.34% efficacy based on an interim analysis of late-stage clinical trials. That rate is lower than the 86% rate for the same vaccine reported by the United Arab Emirates on Dec. 9.

https://uk.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-vaccine-china/different-efficacy-data-for-chinese-covid-19-vaccine-real-and-valid-media-idUKKBN29703A

**AstraZeneca expects to supply two million doses of COVID-19 vaccine every week in UK - The Times**

About two million doses of COVID-19 vaccine developed by Oxford University and AstraZeneca are set to be supplied every week by the middle of January in the United Kingdom, The Times reported. AstraZeneca expects to supply two million doses of the vaccine in total by next week, the newspaper reported, citing an unnamed member of the Oxford-AstraZeneca team. "The plan is then to build it up fairly rapidly - by the third week of January we should get to two million a week," the report added.

https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-britain-astrazenec/astrazeneca-expects-to-supply-two-million-doses-of-covid-19-vaccine-every-week-in-uk-the-times-idUKKBN2962NI

**Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine expected to get EUA by January — FDA**

The application for Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) of  American pharmaceutical firm Pfizer in the Philippines may be approved before the end of

https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1377859/pfizers-covid-19-vaccine-expected-to-get-eua-by-january-fda

**Pfizer warns there is NO proof its Covid jab works when doses are taken 12 weeks apart as UK regulator scraps 21-day rule in desperate attempt to get millions more vaccinated**

Regulator now recommending jabs are given in two doses three months apart Originally Pfizer and Oxford jabs intended to be injected in space of four weeks Change in strategy is to cope with spiking

Covid cases and hospitalisations
https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9099049/Questions-Britains-decision-drop-two-dose-vaccine-regimen.html?ito=social-twitter_dailymailUK

**WHO lists Pfizer-BioNTech COVID vaccine for emergency use**
The World Health Organization has listed Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use, a critical step that the United Nations health agency said aims to make the vaccine more readily available in developing nations. In a statement on Thursday, WHO said its validation of the vaccine – the first since the start of the pandemic – "opens the door for countries to expedite their own regulatory approval processes to import and administer the vaccine".
https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/31/who-lists-pfizer-biontech-covid-vaccine-for-emergency-use

**Covid vaccine advice to people with severe allergies changes after Oxford jab approval**
Coronavirus vaccine advice to people with severe allergies has changed after today's approval of the Oxford jab. People with a history of "significant" allergic reactions to medicines, food or vaccines were advised they should not receive the Pfizer vaccine when it was approved earlier this month. However, professor Sir Munir Pirmohamed, chairman of the Commission on Human Medicines expert working group on Covid-19 vaccines, gave updated advice for those with allergies following the approval of the Oxford vaccine today. He said: "We've come to the recommendation people with a known history of reacting to any specific ingredients of vaccines should not have it, but people with allergies to other medicines or food can have the vaccine.
https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/covid-vaccine-advice-people-severe-23239156

**Survey: COVID vaccine willingness waned since April**
National survey results published yesterday in JAMA Network Open show that the number of people who say they are somewhat or very likely to seek COVID-19 vaccination fell from 74% to 56% from April to December, after press coverage of high effectiveness for two vaccines in phase 3 trials but before they were authorized for emergency use in the United States. The study results, published as a research letter, were based on biweekly, online, probability-based tracking surveys of 8,167 community-dwelling adult US participants in the Understanding America Study, led by researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles. Each survey prompted responses from 5,259 to 6,139 participants, with completion rates of 75% to 97%.
https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2020/12/survey-covid-vaccine-willingness-waned-april

**Covid-19 Vaccine Made by AstraZeneca, Oxford Is Authorized by U.K.**
The U.K. authorized a Covid-19 vaccine developed by the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca PLC, opening the door for distributing millions of doses in a country where a more infectious variant of the coronavirus has contributed to surging cases. British health officials also recommended a delay of as long as three months between both doses of the vaccine, guidance that also applies to the shot developed by Pfizer Inc. and BioNTech SE that the U.K. authorized earlier this month. The delay will allow inoculations to reach more people more quickly as the variant pushes new cases to records and hospitalizations soar. The green light represents the third emergency-use approval of a Western-developed vaccine this month and comes as cases rise sharply in Europe and the U.S., which reported its first confirmed case of the variant Tuesday. The Pfizer-BioNTech shot and one developed by Moderna Inc. have been cleared in the U.S.
https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-vaccine-made-by-astrazeneca-oxford-is-approved-by-u-k-11609312200

## Coronavirus Resurgence

**Australia's COVID-19 cases on the rise as masks made compulsory**
Australia's most-populous state of New South Wales (NSW) reported eight new COVID-19 cases on Sunday, while neighbouring Victoria's tally increased by three, as new measures to combat the

disease kicked in. The NSW outbreak started around mid-December in Sydney's Northern Beaches area, where a quarter of a million people are in strict lockdown until Jan. 9. Cases associated with the cluster now total 148. A smaller cluster in the west of the city, linked to a different genome sequence, has 13 confirmed cases. But the state's chief health officer, Kerry Chant, said authorities are worried as recent transmission at a liquor store occurred with "fleeting" exposure.
https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-australia/australias-covid-19-cases-on-the-rise-as-masks-made-compulsory-idUSKBN298009

**Norway imposes new restrictions to prevent new wave, says PM**

Norway will impose fresh restrictions to prevent a resurgence in the spread of the coronavirus, Prime Minister Erna Solberg said on Sunday, including a nationwide ban on serving alcohol in restaurants and bars and not inviting guests home. The Nordic country has seen a rise in cases over the past month and now estimates its R number - which represents the average number of people that one infected person will pass the virus on to - stands at 1.3. "We see more signs of a new wave of infections," Solberg told a news conference, citing Christmas and New Year's Eve celebrations and the emergence of the more contagious variant of the virus first identified in Britain among the reasons.
https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-norway-idUSKBN2980IC

**Thailand mulls more restrictions amid second wave of coronavirus**

Thailand's government held off from ordering new nationwide business shutdowns on Sunday amid a wave of coronavirus cases but empowered some provincial governors to set their own restrictions and pleaded with the public not to travel. Thailand, which had largely controlled the virus by mid-2020, saw a second wave of outbreaks beginning in December. On Sunday, it confirmed 315 new coronavirus cases, the majority of which are local transmission, bringing its total to 7,694 cases and 64 deaths since its first case last January.
https://uk.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-thailand-idUKKBN29803S?taid=5ff159eb5b2aa0000136425b&utm_campaign=trueAnthem:+Trending+Content&utm_medium=trueAnthem&utm_source=twitter

**Tokyo to request new emergency declaration as COVID-19 cases climb - media**

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government will ask the central government later on Saturday to declare a state of emergency following a resurgence of COVID-19 cases, local media reported. Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike will make the request in a meeting with Economy Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura, who coordinates government measures to fight the pandemic, the Nikkei newspaper said, citing multiple sources. Calls by Reuters to the governor's office were not answered.
https://uk.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-tokyo-emergency/tokyo-to-request-new-emergency-declaration-as-covid-19-cases-climb-media-idUKKBN29701R

**Coronavirus: Kent hospitals 'overwhelmed' as ICU bed occupancy hits 137%**

More critically ill patients are being transferred to hospitals across England as NHS trusts in Kent reported bed occupancy levels in intensive care reaching 137 per cent on New Year's Day. Eleven hospitals across the Kent and Surrey regions are failing to meet nurse-to-patient staffing ratios in intensive care, raising concerns for patient safety. Thresholds for admitting patients to intensive care are being revised, and clinicians in the region say some patients who should be in intensive care are instead being looked after on other wards because there is simply not enough space available.
https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/kent-hospitals-coronavirus-nhs-beds-b1781315.html

**Suddenly overwhelmed, Ireland says thousands of COVID-19 cases yet to be added to tally**

Ireland said on Friday it had under-reported coronavirus cases in recent days by thousands more than previously known as its system came under strain, suggesting the EU's fastest growing

outbreak is worsening even more rapidly than figures showed. More than 9,000 people who have tested positive for COVID-19 have yet to been added to the official tally of confirmed cases, the National Public Health Emergency Team said. A day earlier it had estimated the number of positive tests still pending registration at just 4,000. Ireland has gone from having the lowest infection rate in the European Union just two weeks ago to having the fastest rate of deterioration, after shops and large parts of the hospitality sector were allowed to reopen for most of December.
https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-ireland-idUKKBN2962MA

**UK records 53,285 new COVID-19 cases, 613 deaths**
The United Kingdom recorded a further 53,285 cases of COVID-19 on Friday, the fourth day running that it has topped 50,000, and 613 deaths, official data showed. The rise in cases compares with the 55,892 that were reported on Thursday, while the death tally marks a fall from the 964 reported the day before.
https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-britain-cases-idUKKBN2962GZ

**Americans Urged to Keep Guard Up as New Virus Strain Spreads**
Officials from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention urged Americans on Wednesday to step up social distancing and other measures to curb the spread of Covid-19, a day after confirming a more contagious strain of the virus had reached the United States. The CDC also confirmed another variant of the coronavirus originating from South Africa is turning up in other countries and may soon appear in the U.S. “Both of these variants appear to infect people more easily,” said Dr. Henry Walke, the CDC’s Covid-19 incident manager, in a press call. “There is no evidence that either of these variants causes more severe disease or increases the risk of death.”
https://www.courthousenews.com/americans-urged-to-keep-guard-up-as-new-virus-strain-spreads/

**Doctors can't get a Covid vaccine in Wales and say the health service is in danger of collapse**
Frontline doctors and other healthcare professionals are still struggling to access the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine in Wales, it is claimed. Dr David Bailey, chairman of the British Medical Association's (BMA) Welsh Council, said the Welsh NHS was "in danger of collapse" due to soaring staff absence levels. He said it was "unacceptable" that frontline clinicians were still being exposed to the virus day in, day out without proper protection. His comments come following the announcement that the Oxford University AstraZeneca vaccine has been approved for use by the MHRA and will be rolled out in Wales from next week.
https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/health/doctors-cant-covid-vaccine-wales-19539435

## New Lockdown

**Colombia's Bogota puts three neighborhoods in quarantine once more**
Colombia’s capital Bogota will implement strict two-week quarantines in three neighborhoods beginning Tuesday to try and control a second wave of coronavirus, the mayor’s office said on Sunday. Home to a combined 2.7 million people, Bogota’s neighborhoods of Usaquen, Suba, and Engativa will enter strict quarantines with restrictions on movement and the shuttering of non-essential retail, as well as restaurants and bars, until Jan. 18, the mayor’s office said. “We’re taking action due to the accelerated increase in the occupancy of COVID intensive care units that we have seen in the last 48 hours,” acting Mayor of Bogota Luis Ernesto Gomez said in a press conference. The sale of alcoholic drinks in these three neighborhoods will also be banned on weekends during the quarantine period, the mayor’s office added.
https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-colombia/colombias-bogota-puts-three-neighborhoods-in-quarantine-once-more-idUSKBN299062

**'Overwhelmed' Zimbabwe tightens COVID-19 restrictions, orders most businesses closed**

Zimbabwe extended a nationwide curfew, banned gatherings and ordered non-essential businesses closed for a month on Saturday in an effort to curb a surge in coronavirus infections. Vice President Constantino Chiwenga, who is also health minister, said some of the tighter restrictions were effective immediately and included a 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew and a ban on inter-city travel. From Tuesday, non-essential businesses would also be suspended, he said. “People must stay at home save for buying food and medicines or transporting sick relatives,” Chiwenga told a news conference.
https://in.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-zimbabwe-lockdown/overwhelmed-zimbabwe-tightens-covid-19-restrictions-orders-most-businesses-closed-idINKBN29802G?il=0

**Australia's NSW tightens restrictions as virus cluster expands**
Australia’s most populous state of New South Wales on Saturday made masks compulsory and imposed new restrictions as its coronavirus cluster expanded by seven, while neighbouring Victoria recorded 10 new locally acquired COVID-19 cases. NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian banned dancing and singing at night clubs while restricting numbers at gym classes, weddings, funerals and places of worship. However, the five-day Cricket test match between Australia and India, scheduled to begin on Thursday, will go ahead with attendance at 50% capacity.
https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-australia/australias-nsw-tightens-restrictions-as-virus-cluster-expands-idUKKBN29700F?il=0

**Stronger worker safety measures and transparency around workplace outbreaks on the way as Toronto reports record COVID-19 cases**
Stronger worker safety measures and detailed data around workplace outbreaks on the way as Toronto reports record COVID-19 cases
https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2020/12/30/toronto-reports-record-1069-covid-19-cases-as-officials-say-new-workplace-restrictions-coming-next-week.html

**Japan Considering Virus Emergency as Cases Surge, Suga Says**
Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga is considering declaring a state of emergency to stem a surge in coronavirus infections that has sent the country’s number of confirmed cases to record highs in recent days. Suga told a news conference Monday the government will finalize the extent of the emergency declaration shortly as it pushes to strengthen measures against the virus. He also urged people to avoid unnecessary outings and said he will ask parliament to amend an act on virus management when it convenes this month.
https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-04/japan-considering-virus-emergency-in-tokyo-region-fnn-says