COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

25th Aug 2021

Overnight News RoundUp

One Minute Overview

1. **Scotland to hold its own coronavirus public inquiry by end of year** - Scotland will establish its own judge-led public inquiry into the handling of the coronavirus pandemic by the end of the year, adding to pressure on the UK, Welsh and Northern Irish governments to "show leadership", according to relatives who lost loved ones to the virus. Confirming the announcement at her Covid briefing, the first minister, Nicola Sturgeon, said she believed it was appropriate to start the statutory inquiry "as soon as possible" and that Scotland's lord advocate had begun discussions to appoint a judge. At the briefing, Sturgeon also warned some Covid controls could be reimposed in Scotland after the country experienced a record rise in new cases, which have doubled in the past week.
2. **Asian American leaders fear Covid-19 origin report could fuel more bigotry and violence** - Asian American leaders are concerned that a U.S. government report on the origins of the Covid-19 virus expected to be released this week by the Biden administration will be used to 'legitimize racist language' and lead to more anti-Asian violence across the country.
3. **Covid-19 Australia: The rule that may be in place 'for years' as Australia plans way out of lockdown** - Australians could be forced to wear masks 'for years' in certain indoor settings. Dr Kerry Chant said even at 80 per cent vaccination rate some rules will be needed. Masks may be needed in venues that are a high risk for Covid transmission. There could be a ban in high-risk venues on visitors who are unvaccinated
4. **Greece announces new restrictions for those not vaccinated** - Greece's health minister announced plans on Tuesday to impose new testing requirements and attendance restrictions on people who aren't vaccinated against COVID-19. The measures include requiring weekly or twice-weekly testing for unvaccinated workers, and allowing access to certain indoor venues only to those who are vaccinated or have a certificate verifying they have recovered from COVID-19 in the last six months. Health Minister Vassilis Kikilias said the new measures weren't punitive, but "what we must do as a responsible state."
5. **French backs COVID booster jab initiative for those 65 and older** - **F**rance's national health body has backed plans for coronavirus vaccine booster jabs for people aged 65 and older. Health minister Olivier Véran announced the booster jab campaign on BFM TV on Monday, but he said he was awaiting confirmation from the health body. On Tuesday, the Haute Autorité de Santé (HAS) recommended the plans, saying in a statement: "After analysing the available data, the HAS proposes a booster dose with an mRNA vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna, editor's note) for people aged 65 and over, as well as for people with comorbidities that increase the risk of severe forms of COVID-19."
6. **SWISS introduces mandatory COVID-19 vaccination for crews** - SWISS is making COVID-19 vaccination mandatory for its entire flying personnel from mid-November onwards, for operational reasons and under its duty of care towards its employees. Swiss International Air Lines (SWISS) is making vaccination against COVID-19 mandatory for all its flying personnel from 15 November onwards. The action has been taken in response to national entry restrictions worldwide, which are seeing an increasing insistence on proof of such vaccination for air crews, too. Hong Kong recently became the first SWISS destination to demand – with

immediate effect – proof of COVID-19 vaccination for crews arriving from certain countries, Switzerland included.

7. **The US could enter spring of 2022 with Covid-19 under control if enough people get vaccinated, Fauci says** - Vaccine effectiveness against Covid-19 infection dropped from 91% to 66% once the Delta variant accounted for the majority of circulating virus, according to a study published Tuesday by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 'While we did see a reduction in the protection of the Covid-19 vaccine against the Delta variant, it's still two-thirds reduction of risk,' lead author Ashley Fowlkes, an epidemiologist for CDC Covid-19 Emergency Response, told CNN on Tuesday. The study is in line with others from the US and around the world showing Delta's increased tendency to cause largely minor infections among fully vaccinated people. Still, the effectiveness of vaccines against severe disease -- including hospitalization and death -- has remained high against all known variants.
8. **'Exhausted' Florida doctors gather outside hospital to urge people to get vaccinated** - A group of 75 South Florida doctors staged a news conference Monday outside a medical office to urge people to get the COVID-19 vaccine and wear masks as the state battles a wave of new infections and hospitalizations driven by the delta variant. The conference took place before office hours and included leadership and staff from surrounding hospitals, according to U.S. News. "We are exhausted. Our patience and resources are running low and we need your help," Rupesh Dharia from Palm Beach Internal Medicine told NBC 8. Healthcare workers are reporting high rates of fatigue and burnout, on top of frustration over the lack of vaccinations among patients and the public, according to The Wall Street Journal.
9. **Analysis: Delta variant disrupts Hollywood's box office comeback** - Three months after Hollywood launched a marketing blitz that proclaimed 'the big screen is back,' the Delta variant of the coronavirus has interrupted cinema's rebound from the pandemic. Studio executives and movie theater operators, meeting this week in Las Vegas for the annual CinemaCon convention, hoped to reignite moviegoing this summer. After encouraging turnouts for action flicks such as Marvel's 'Black Widow' and 'Fast & Furious' franchise movie 'F9,' recent U.S. and Canadian ticket sales have underwhelmed. 'The only audience that seems to be going on a consistent basis is 18- to 35-(year olds),' said Jeff Bock, senior media analyst at Exhibitor Relations Co.
10. **Study shows why opening windows in class will not stop COVID-19** - Open windows in a classroom may give a false, or incomplete, impression of good ventilation. Cold surfaces, such as windows, can pose an additional risk in enclosed spaces. The key to reducing transmission is to limit horizontal airflow at the breathing level. To reduce SARS-CoV-2 exposure indoors, it is crucial to space seating according to guidelines, wear masks, and keep windows open.

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https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/aug/24/scotland-to-hold-its-own-coronavirus-public-inquiry-by-end-of-year

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https://edition.cnn.com/2021/08/24/us/anti-asian-bias-biden-covid-19-origin-report/index.html

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https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9921137/Covid-19-Australia-rule-place-years-Australia-plans-way-lockdown.html

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https://apnews.com/article/europe-business-health-greece-coronavirus-pandemic-9656434341e8db7aa36fd73a2cbbb50c

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https://www.euronews.com/2021/08/24/french-backs-covid-booster-jab-initiative-for-those-65-and-older?utm_source=flipboard.com&utm_campaign=feeds_news&utm_medium=referral

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https://swiss.newsmarket.com/english/press-releases/swiss-introduces-mandatory-covid-19-vaccination-for-crews/s/3bc803c8-23b5-408a-8cd4-977e8001e597

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https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/24/health/us-coronavirus-tuesday/index.html

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A group of 75 South Florida doctors staged a news conference Monday outside a medical office to urge people to get the COVID-19 vaccine and wear masks as the state battles a wave of new infections and hospitalizations driven by the delta variant. The conference took place before office hours and included leadership and staff from surrounding hospitals, according to U.S. News. “We are exhausted. Our patience and resources are running low and we need your help,” Rupesh Dharia from Palm Beach Internal Medicine told NBC 8. Healthcare workers are reporting high rates of fatigue and burnout, on top of frustration over the lack of vaccinations among patients and the public, according to The Wall Street Journal.

https://thehill.com/changing-america/well-being/prevention-cures/569183-doctors-walk-out-of-hospitals-to-protest-new

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https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/delta-variant-disrupts-hollywoods-box-office-comeback-2021-08-24/

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Open windows in a classroom may give a false, or incomplete, impression of good ventilation. Cold surfaces, such as windows, can pose an additional risk in enclosed spaces. The key to reducing transmission is to limit horizontal airflow at the breathing level. To reduce SARS-CoV-2 exposure indoors, it is crucial to space seating according to guidelines, wear masks, and keep windows open.

https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/schools-will-need-more-than-fresh-air-to-stop-covid-19-mit-study

China should avoid excessive,

China should avoid excessive, "flood-like" COVID measures -former CDC expert

The benefits of China's zero-tolerance approach to COVID-19 continue to outweigh the costs but it should cut back on excessive measures that risk exhausting people, a former Chinese disease control official said on Tuesday. Zeng Guang, former chief epidemiologist at Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, said "flood-like" measures and policies that prove inefficient should be avoided even though China has the financial resources to keep pursuing the goal of zero local infections.

https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/china-should-avoid-excessive-flood-like-covid-measures-former-cdc-expert-2021-08-24/

University of Minnesota mandates COVID-19 vaccinations

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The University of Minnesota will require all students to get vaccinated against COVID-19. President Joan Gabel and Jakub Tolar, dean of the university medical school, issued a news release Monday hours after the U.S. Food and Drug Administration fully approved the Pfizer version of the vaccine saying shots will be mandatory and students will receive an email in the next few days with instructions on how to confirm their vaccination status. The mandate is effective at University of Minnesota campuses in the Twin Cities, Crookston, Duluth, Morris and Rochester. Faculty and staff members will be required to inform the university of their vaccination status. Gabel and Tolar called the FDA's approval a "milestone" in managing COVID-19.

https://apnews.com/article/sports-nfl-health-coronavirus-pandemic-minnesota-vikings-8197f75caa5b8a4080accb59ef844836

NHS Covid pass still not recognised in some EU countries

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British tourists face difficulties in proving their vaccine status in Europe following a delay in linking the NHS Covid pass to the EU's system due to gaps in the British government's application to Brussels. An IT tie-up would ensure automatic recognition across the 27 member states of the information held on the NHS app, facilitating both international travel and access to hospitality where proof of vaccine status is required. The UK government made an application to link up to the EU's digital certificate on 28 July but the European Commission has held off on giving its approval as it has sought extra technical information from Whitehall, the Guardian understands. While at least 19 EU countries, including major tourist destinations such as France and Spain, have unilaterally accepted the NHS app as proof of vaccine status, difficulties remain for some travellers from England and Wales due to the lack of pan-EU recognition.

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/24/nhs-covid-pass-still-not-recognised-in-some-eu-countries

N.Y.C. Educators Must Be Vaccinated by September, de Blasio Says

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New York City will require all Department of Education employees to have received at least one dose of a coronavirus vaccine by Sept. 27, Mayor Bill de Blasio said Monday. The announcement represents a major step in the effort to fully reopen the country's largest school district next month, and a significant escalation of the mayor's push to vaccinate more New Yorkers. Mr. de Blasio has put reopening city schools at the center of his plan to help New York recover from the pandemic. The mayor is eager to reassure anxious parents and educators that schools will be safe this year despite an uptick in cases in the last two months linked to the Delta variant, especially since the city is no longer offering a remote learning option.

https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/23/nyregion/nyc-schools-vaccine-mandate.html

Pakistan gets $2.75 bln in COVID-19 support funds from IMF

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Pakistan on Tuesday received $2.75 billion from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) under a Special Drawing Rights (SDR) programme to support low-income countries hit by the coronavirus, its central bank said. The funds, part of a $650 billion global programme, will shore up Pakistan's foreign reserves, under pressure from a rise in the current account deficit and falling remittances from workers based abroad. Pakistan entered a $6 billion IMF program in 2019, a sixth review of which has been pending since March.

https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/pakistan-gets-275-bln-covid-19-support-funds-imf-2021-08-24/

Egypt to intensify vaccination ahead of a fourth COVID-19 wave

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Egypt will vaccinate all 4.5 million of its state employees against COVID-19 in August and September as it seeks to accelerate vaccinations ahead of a likely fourth wave of infections, the health minister said on Monday. The country's infection rate is still low but started to increase last week and the upward curve is expected to continue for a while, Hala Zayed told a briefing, adding that a significant increase is expected in late September.

https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/egypt-intensify-vaccination-ahead-fourth-covid-19-wave-2021-08-23/

Nigeria approves Sinopharm COVID vaccine, expects 7.7 mln doses

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Nigeria has approved the Sinopharm vaccine against COVID-19 in the past three days, the head of the country's primary healthcare agency said on Tuesday. Nigeria has been allocated 7.7 million doses of the vaccine through the COVAX scheme aimed at providing vaccines to developing countries, although it has not yet received the doses.

https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/nigeria-approves-sinopharm-covid-vaccine-expects-77-mln-doses-2021-08-24/

Thailand to receive 61 mln doses of AstraZeneca vaccine this year

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Thailand will receive 61 million doses of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine this year, a government spokesperson said on Monday, as the Southeast Asian country rushes to vaccinate its population amid a surge in coronavirus infections. Thailand is AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing hub for the region, but has been slow to obtain enough shots to inoculate its population. About 9% of Thailand's 66 million people have been fully vaccinated.

https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/thailand-buy-60-mln-doses-astrazenecas-covid-19-vaccine-2022-2021-08-23/

Gig apps for a pandemic economy: Part time, no commitment

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For months, Gabrielle Walker had been looking for a part-time job. She applied to restaurant chains and retailers like Nando’s and Primark, and she scoured the job search site Indeed. Nothing. Then one day, Walker, a 19-year-old student at University College London, was scrolling through TikTok and stumbled on a video about an app called Stint. A face on the screen explained that Stint could help students earn money by working brief temporary stints at places like restaurants and bars that require little training or experience.

https://apnews.com/article/lifestyle-europe-business-health-coronavirus-pandemic-594c590928088a91745a48fc69ef1cb9

Maine has vaccinated 95% of people in their 70s for COVID-19

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Maine health officials have reported that 95% of state residents who are in their 70s have been fully

vaccinated against the coronavirus. Maine is one of the oldest states in the country, and it also has one of the highest rates of COVID-19 vaccination. The Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention reported Tuesday that 95% of the more than 125,000 people in their 70s in the state have now had their final shots. More than 70% of the state's eligible population is fully vaccinated. That means they have had one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine or both doses of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine.

https://apnews.com/article/health-maine-coronavirus-pandemic-56d492766676a62eee3504a3bf899610

Gov. Kemp deploys National Guard to help Georgia hospitals

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Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp announced Tuesday he would deploy 105 medically trained National Guard personnel to hospitals across the state. In coordination with the Georgia Emergency Management Agency and the Department of Community Health, the Georgia National Guard will deploy to more than a dozen hospitals, including Southeast Georgia Health System in Brunswick, Memorial Health University Medical Center in Savannah and Phoebe Putney in Albany. "These guardsmen will assist our frontline healthcare workers as they provide quality medical care during the current increase in cases and hospitalizations, and I greatly appreciate General Carden and his team for their willingness to answer the call again in our fight against COVID-19," Kemp said. "This Georgia National Guard mission is in addition to the 2,800 state-supported staff and 450 new beds brought online I announced last week, at a total state investment of $625 million through December of this year."

https://www.news4jax.com/news/georgia/2021/08/24/gov-kemp-deploys-national-guard-to-help-georgia-hospitals/?outputType=amp

ACLU sues over South Carolina ban on school mask mandates

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The plaintiffs allege that the ban on mask mandates disproportionately affects students with underlying health conditions or disabilities, who are at risk of becoming seriously ill if they contract COVID-19. South Carolina legislators included a provision in the state's general budget, passed in June, that prevented school districts from using state funding to require masks in schools. But some school districts and cities have disregarded the ban and gone forward with implementing a school mask mandate. The ban on mask mandates is in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act, the plaintiffs allege in the lawsuit.

https://apnews.com/article/health-education-coronavirus-pandemic-south-carolina-f9121354a9affefb58b72a2b8bc1cbd2

EU okays increase in mRNA COVID-19 vaccines manufacturing capacity

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Europe's medicines regulator has approved additional manufacturing sites for mRNA-based coronavirus vaccines developed by Pfizer-BioNTech, and Moderna to help boost production amid a resurgence in infections. The European Medicines Agency (EMA) said on Tuesday its human medicines committee had approved a site at Saint Remy sur Avre in France for making the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, Comirnaty.

https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eu-okays-increase-mrna-covid-19-vaccines-manufacturing-capacity-2021-08-24/

MHRA approves first novel monoclonal antibody treatment for Covid-19

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A new antibody treatment to be used in the prevention and treatment of 'acute' Covid-19 infection has been approved by the UK medicines regulator. Ronapreve, developed by Regenron/Roche, is the

first novel monoclonal antibody treatment, developed specifically for targeting Covid-19, to be given the go ahead in the UK. NHS England previously said that GPs may soon handle referrals of patients to receive such treatments. And the DHSC told Pulse that 'deployment details' for Ronapreve, will be announced in due course – including which patients will be eligible to receive the treatment.
https://www.pulsetoday.co.uk/news/coronavirus/mhra-approves-first-novel-monoclonal-antibody-treatment-for-covid-19/

India approves further trials for first homegrown mRNA COVID-19 shot

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India has approved further clinical trials for its first homegrown mRNA-based COVID-19 vaccine developed by Gennova Biopharmaceuticals Ltd, the government said on Tuesday, after the shot was found to be safe and effective in an early-stage study. Gennova is among a few pharmaceutical firms worldwide, including Moderna Inc and Pfizer Inc, to use mRNA technology in its coronavirus shot. These vaccines do not use a live virus to generate an immune response but prompt the human body to make a protein that triggers one.
https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/indian-drug-regulators-say-gennovas-covid-19-vaccine-safe-early-trials-2021-08-24/

A lucky few seem 'resistant' to Covid-19. Scientists ask why

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University of Sao Paolo's Mayana Zatz's work is part of a growing effort to identify factors that may make people resistant to Covid, with the goal of finding clues to treatments, as well as understanding resistance against viruses more broadly. Other scientists have run lab experiments using CRISPR genome-editing technology to disable genes, in search of ones that could be manipulated to perhaps protect those of us not fortunate enough to have natural resistance against the coronavirus. "The biological implications [of identifying a resistance gene] are important because it will provide one more piece in the assembly of the puzzle of the pathogenesis of Covid," said pediatric immunologist Jean-Laurent Casanova of Rockefeller University, who has been studying the genes involved in Covid-19 severity, but is now shifting to look at elements of resistance.
https://www.statnews.com/2021/08/23/lucky-few-seem-resistant-to-covid19-scientists-want-to-know-why-2/

Vietnam says Cuba to supply COVID-19 vaccine, transfer technology

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Cuba will supply large quantities of its home-grown COVID-19 vaccine, Abdala, to Vietnam and also transfer the production technology to the Southeast Asian country by the end of the year, the Vietnamese health ministry said on Tuesday.
https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/vietnam-says-cuba-supply-covid-19-vaccine-transfer-technology-2021-08-24/

Fauci expects uptick after FDA OKs Pfizer shot

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Dr. Anthony Fauci says he's hoping for an uptick in the administration of COVID-19 vaccinations following U.S. government approval of the Pfizer vaccine. The top infectious disease expert in the U.S. says the Food and Drug Administration's decision Monday should encourage people who cited lack of approval as a reason for not getting vaccinated. The FDA previously had cleared the Pfizer shots for use on an emergency basis. Fauci told NBC's "Today Show" that FDA approval will mean more "enthusiasm" for vaccine mandates by workplaces, colleges and universities, and the military. He says it will help boost U.S. vaccination rates.
https://apnews.com/article/canada-business-health-coronavirus-pandemic-coronavirus-vaccine-2a68430128b1c57d54be837c8529eda3

Israel's COVID-19 vaccine boosters show signs of taming Delta

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Less than a month into a COVID-19 vaccine booster drive, Israel is seeing signs of an impact on the country's high infection and severe illness rates fuelled by the fast-spreading Delta variant, officials and scientists say. Delta hit Israel in June, just as the country began to reap the benefits of one of the world's fastest vaccine roll-outs.

https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israels-covid-19-vaccine-boosters-show-signs-taming-delta-2021-08-24/

Japan to expand COVID state of emergency to eight more prefectures -NHK

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Japan will expand its coronavirus state of emergency to the northern island of Hokkaido and seven other prefectures, public broadcaster NHK reported on Tuesday. They will join 13 other prefectures, including Tokyo, currently which are under the measures until Sept. 12, NHK said.

https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japan-expand-covid-state-emergency-eight-more-prefectures-nhk-2021-08-24/

First athlete tests positive for Covid-19 in Tokyo's Paralympic village

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An athlete has tested positive for Covid-19 in the Paralympic village for the first time, it has been confirmed. On the day the Games begin, officials said nine other new cases had also been detected among people working at the Games outside the village and that the athlete, whose identity has not been revealed, had been moved to an isolation facility.

https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/aug/24/first-athlete-tests-positive-for-covid-19-in-tokyo-paralympic-village

North Korea coronavirus vaccines delayed, as UN-backed program renews efforts

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The United Nations-backed global vaccination effort is offering a new allocation of coronavirus vaccine to North Korea, one of a few countries yet to start inoculating residents after a delay in a distribution program slated to begin this summer. The Gavi Alliance, part of the Covax initiative that aims to deliver vaccines to the world's most vulnerable people, said last week that it has allocated nearly 3 million doses of the Chinese-made Sinovac vaccine to North Korea. The announcement came after plans to deliver nearly 2 million doses of the AstraZeneca-Oxford University vaccine were scrapped, amid North Korea's apparent concerns about potential side effects and a supply shortage at an India-based distributor.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/north-korea-vaccine-delay/2021/08/24/fdf1b054-031a-11ec-825d-01701f9ded64_story.html

Lecturers at Georgia university resign over COVID concerns

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Two University of North Georgia lecturers have resigned over concerns about teaching in the classroom during the state's latest COVID-19 surge. "I feel that with COVID surging and us being asked to teach our courses face-to-face with potentially unmasked and unvaccinated students that, in my case, I think they are asking me to choose between my job and the health of myself and my family," Lorraine Buchbinder told The Times of Gainesville. Buchbinder a colleague — Cornelia Lambert — resigned last week, she said. Both are history lecturers. Masks and vaccinations are "strongly encouraged, but not mandated," school spokeswoman Sylvia Carson said.

https://apnews.com/article/health-education-georgia-coronavirus-pandemic-68d49b68b7dc73cf6615bc646972a4ec