

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

12th Apr 2022

Lockdown Exit

GM develops continuity plan amid China's COVID-19 outbreak

General Motors Co said it has developed a global continuity plan with its partners and suppliers to mitigate the uncertainty faced by the auto industry following China's COVID-19 outbreak. The Detroit-based automaker said it was on track to launch more than 20 new and refreshed models in the world's biggest auto market despite the pandemic's impact. The COVID-19 curbs introduced in China to fight the worst outbreak in two years caused auto sales in the country to plunge in March, with automakers like Tesla Inc feeling the pain of limits on production.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/autos-transportation/gm-develops-continuity-plan-amid-chinas-covid-19-outbreak-2022-04-11/>

Shanghai eases lockdown in some areas despite record COVID infections

China's financial centre of Shanghai started easing its lockdown in some areas on Monday despite reporting a record of more than 25,000 new COVID-19 infections, as authorities sought to get the city moving again after more than two weeks. Pressure has been mounting on authorities in China's most populous city, and one of its wealthiest, from residents growing increasingly frustrated as the curbs dragged on, leaving some struggling to find enough food and medicine. City officials announced on Monday morning that they were grouping residential units into three risk categories as a step towards allowing "appropriate activity" by those in neighbourhoods with no positive cases during a two-week stretch, adding that district authorities would publish further details.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghais-covid-infections-rise-city-looks-get-moving-again-2022-04-11/>

With COVID mission over, Pentagon plans for next pandemic

In the early days of the pandemic, the Pentagon steamed hospital ships to New York City and Los Angeles, and set up massive hospital facilities in convention centers and parking lots, in response to pleas from state government leaders. The idea was to use them to treat non-COVID-19 patients, allowing hospitals to focus on the more acute pandemic cases. But while images of the military ships were powerful, too often many beds went unused. A more agile approach emerged: having military medical personnel step in for exhausted hospital staff members or work alongside them or in additional treatment areas in unused spaces.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-army-pandemics-30ed7838294b3afcfdf3defa2f4d10c0>

Nursing Homes Face Growing Number of Lawsuits From Covid-19 Fallout

Two years after the coronavirus ravaged through nursing homes, families of residents who died from Covid-19 are bringing a wave of negligence and wrongful death lawsuits against the facilities. The surge of suits, spurred by a repeal of liability protections and statutory deadlines to file the suits, largely accuses nursing homes of failing to properly curb the spread of disease, identify infected residents and treat their illnesses.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/nursing-homes-face-growing-number-of-lawsuits-from-covid-19-fallout-11649507400>

With fewer cases and less demand, many Covid-19 testing sites are shutting down

As Covid-19 numbers reach pandemic lows across the United States, many Covid-19 testing sites have begun closing their doors. Some testing sites have been open for almost two years, many seeing hundreds or even thousands of people a day. Now, home tests are more readily available, and demand for testing sites is falling. Sarah Henderson, director of the Public Health Services

Division of the Haywood County Health and Human Services Agency in North Carolina, says most states will see closures soon, if they haven't already.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/11/health/covid-testing-site-closures/index.html>

This invisible Covid-19 mitigation measure is finally getting the attention it deserves

Two-plus years into the Covid-19 pandemic, you probably know the basics of protection: vaccines, boosters, proper handwashing and masks. But one of the most powerful tools against the coronavirus is one that experts believe is just starting to get the attention it deserves: ventilation.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/10/health/covid-19-ventilation-matters-wellness/index.html>

Moderna names Jorge Gomez as new CFO

Moderna Inc named Jorge Gomez, a senior executive at dental products maker Dentsply Sirona Inc, as its new chief financial officer, effective May 9. Gomez, who has been serving as the finance chief of Dentsply since August 2019, will succeed David Meline, who has decided to retire, Moderna said. Before joining Dentsply, Gomez was with drug distributor Cardinal Health Inc (CAH.N) for over a decade in several roles, including CFO. Moderna's current finance chief Meline joined the company in June 2020, as it was preparing to advance its COVID-19 vaccine into late-stage development.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/moderna-names-jorge-gomez-new-cfo-2022-04-11/>

Pfizer taps David Denton from Lowe's as CFO

Pfizer Inc said that Lowe's Cos Inc Chief Financial Officer David Denton would succeed company veteran Frank D'Amelio as the U.S. drugmaker's finance chief. Denton, who has also held leadership positions at CVS Health, will join Pfizer on May 2, the company said. He will also be a member of Pfizer's Executive Leadership Team and report to Chief Executive Officer Albert Bourla. Pfizer announced the retirement of D'Amelio in November and started an external search for his replacement.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/pfizer-taps-david-denton-lowes-cfo-2022-04-11/>

Which Cities Have Mask Mandates? Philadelphia Reinstates Indoor Requirement

Philadelphia's return to a masking mandate is unlikely to catch on in other U.S. cities, highlighting a split among public health officials over how to contain future outbreaks of the virus. The City of Brotherly Love will make masks a requirement again in indoor settings starting on April 18, but Philadelphia is unique in breaking from guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC shifted its recommendations earlier this year to emphasize hospitalizations over case counts, with universal masking only suggested at its highest risk level. The change has allowed many local government officials to continue reopening and relax restrictions even as the virus rebounds across some parts of the country, since hospitalizations remain low in most places. Indeed, by the CDC's measurements, Philadelphia County remains low-risk. But the city made a commitment when it lifted mask mandates that it would reinstate them if another wave hit.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-11/which-cities-have-mask-mandates-philadelphia-reinstates-indoor-requirement>

Boris Johnson Rejects NHS UK New Covid Restrictions Request

Boris Johnson rejected calls from National Health Service officials for new measures to curb the spread of coronavirus, saying hospital data don't justify shifting from the U.K. plan for "living with Covid." The NHS Confederation over the weekend demanded a "revamp" of the strategy to ease pressure on hospitals, which the organization said are struggling to deal with "critically high demand for emergency care." It also accused the government of abandoning "any interest in Covid whatsoever." More than 20,000 patients are currently in the hospital with Covid-19, the most since February 2021. That's hampering NHS efforts to reduce waiting times that soared during the pandemic, according to the confederation.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-11/johnson-rejects-health-service-call-for-fresh-u-k-covid-curbs?ut>

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Battery Giant CATL Isolates Workers to Avoid Covid Shutdown

Contemporary Amperex Technology Co. Ltd., the world's biggest maker of electric-vehicle batteries, has implemented a so-called closed loop for workers at its main factory in China in a bid to avoid the kind of Covid-19 shutdowns hurting Tesla Inc. and Volkswagen AG. Workers will be shuttled between their dormitories and the factory in Ningde, where an outbreak of Covid cases has prompted the local government to tighten prevention and control measures, the company, better known as CATL, said in a statement Sunday. "To ensure market supply to the best of our capabilities, we have adopted strict grid management measures for the orderly operation of the Ningde production base," the company said.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-10/battery-giant-catl-isolates-workers-to-avoid-covid-shutdown>

States of Covid Performance

More than two years into the Covid-19 pandemic, it's time to draw some conclusions about government policy and results. The most comprehensive comparative study we've seen to date was published last week as a working paper by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), and it deserves wide attention. The authors are University of Chicago economist Casey Mulligan and Stephen Moore and Phil Kerpen of the Committee to Unleash Prosperity. They compare Covid outcomes in the 50 states and District of Columbia based on three variables: the economy, education and mortality. It's a revealing study that belies much of the conventional medical and media wisdom during the pandemic, especially in its first year when severe lockdowns were described as the best, and the only moral, policy.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/states-of-covid-performance-economic-schools-study-working-paper-lockdowns-11649621806>

Exit Strategies

Vaccine Makers Pfizer, Moderna Hire New CFOs

Vaccine makers Pfizer Inc. and Moderna Inc. named company outsiders as chief financial officers as they look to deploy some of the cash they have generated during the Covid-19 pandemic. New York-based Pfizer on Monday said David Denton will take over as CFO on May 2. Mr. Denton has served as finance chief of home-goods retailer Lowe's Cos. since 2018. Before that, he led the finances of CVS Health Corp., the Woonsocket, R.I.-based drugstore and health-services chain. Mr. Denton succeeds longtime CFO Frank D'Amelio, who announced his retirement in November. Mr. D'Amelio, who took over as finance chief in 2007, will remain with Pfizer through the transition period.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/vaccine-makers-pfizer-moderna-hire-new-cfos-11649709243>

Heathrow, Gatwick Flight Status: Dozens Canceled Over Staff Shortages

Dozens of UK flights were cancelled on Monday as airlines continue to struggle with staff shortages. British Airways axed at least 64 domestic or European flights to or from Heathrow. Affected UK routes were between the west London airport and Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Manchester and Newcastle. Among the international routes affected were services to and from Berlin, Dublin, Geneva, Paris and Stockholm. British Airways said passengers were given advanced warning of the cancellations.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-11/dozens-of-uk-flights-axed-as-airlines-struggle-with-staff-shortages>

Shanghai Covid crisis puts China tech on eggshells

Financial elites are confronting a once-unthinkable problem in modern China's wealthiest city: widespread food shortages. Officials in Shanghai have called . It's a chance for the companies to win political brownie points and new users amid regulatory crackdowns.

<https://www.reuters.com/breakingviews/shanghai-covid-crisis-puts-china-tech-eggshells-2022-04-11/>

People 50 and older are eligible for a second COVID booster. Who should get one?

Many people who've been supportive of COVID-19 vaccines all along are now wondering whether they should get a second booster. Last month, the government authorized an additional booster for anyone 50 and older whose last shot was more than four months ago. But just because an extra shot is permitted doesn't mean everyone should get one, health experts say – at least not yet. For those with a healthy immune system, the first two doses dramatically reduce the risk of death from COVID-19. Studies show a third shot likely takes severe disease off the table, too, even with omicron, which swept across the world and infected roughly half of all Americans. But scientific research doesn't offer much guidance on a fourth shot, and the decision has to be highly personal, experts said.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/health/2022/04/11/covid-second-booster-when-to-get-one/7236713001/>

Ontario's top doctor to provide COVID-19 update for first time in more than 4 weeks

Ontario's chief medical officer of health, Dr. Kieran Moore, is set to provide an update on how the province is managing COVID-19 and expanding access to antivirals. The news conference, which will be the first Moore has held since early March, comes on the heels of a report by Public Health Ontario that shows COVID-19 cases, test positivity rates and hospitalizations have gone up since March 21, when the province ended mandatory masking in most indoor spaces.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-covid19-april-11-2022-kieran-moore-briefing-1.6415524>

Debate over COVID-19 close contact isolation as Australia faces peak of Omicron BA.2 wave

As Australia moves into winter, changes to restrictions are up for discussion as governments try to strike the balance between living with COVID-19 and protecting the community. Advice from the Commonwealth's peak chief public health panel, the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC), has suggested close contact isolation should come to an end soon. Most jurisdictions have issued exemptions for close contacts in critical workforces to ensure essential services can continue, but some are now questioning the need for asymptomatic close contacts to spend a week in isolation.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-04-11/covid-close-contact-isolation-rules-debate/100975620>

Japan cancels a third of contracted Astrazeneca vaccine purchase

Japan has cancelled the purchase of about 40 million Astrazeneca COVID-19 vaccine doses it agreed to buy last year, a health ministry official said in parliament on Monday. The contract allowed the government to cancel a portion of the supply if it was unneeded, the official said in response to lawmakers' questioning. Japan had originally agreed to buy 120 million of the shots, with the bulk made domestically by Daiichi Sankyo and other local partners.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japan-cancels-third-contracted-astrazeneca-vaccine-purchase-2022-04-11/>

Germany agrees deal with CureVac, GSK for mRNA vaccines until 2029

Germany has signed a contract with CureVac and its British partner GlaxoSmithKline for domestically produced mRNA vaccines to bolster supplies in case of public health emergencies, the German biotech firm said on Monday. The five-year contract allows for production of up to 80 million doses at short notice until 2029, CureVac said, adding that those doses could be for the remainder of the current pandemic or future outbreaks.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/germany-agrees-deal-with-curevac-gsk-mrna-vaccines-until-2029-2022-04-11/>

Taiwan orders Pfizer's COVID-19 pill as infections rise

Taiwan has ordered 700,000 units of Pfizer's anti-viral COVID-19 pill Paxlovid, its health minister said on Monday, amid a steady increase in the number of infections as the government pledges to gradually reopen its borders. Taiwan has kept the pandemic well under control thanks to strict and

early control measures. But daily infections have been rising in recent weeks, with 439 new cases reported on Monday, the second highest daily increase this year.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taiwan-orders-pfizers-covid-19-pill-infections-rise-2022-04-11/>

Japan's Low-Key Covid Campaign Is More Sustainable Than China's All-Out Efforts

Shanghai is locked down and some of its residents are running out of food. As China battles its largest-ever Covid outbreak, the discourse swings between two extremes: The country must accept Covid Zero and sporadic, disruptive lockdowns; or it must live with the virus western-style — and endure all deaths that ensue. For Chinese authorities, the former may no longer work but the latter is unacceptable. But there's an alternative: China should look to what can be learned from its neighbor Japan. Japan conducted a largely low-tech, unshowy campaign against the virus and rarely makes the list of top-performing countries. Yet among the 38 OECD members, only one has seen fewer deaths per capita than Japan — and that's New Zealand, a nation that endured some of the world's strictest lockdowns

<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2022-04-10/japan-s-low-key-covid-campaign-is-more-sustainable-than-china-s-all-out-efforts>

Germany may have to junk 3 million COVID shots by late June

Germany's health ministry said that the country may have to discard 3 million doses of expired COVID-19 vaccine by the end of June. Ministry spokesman Hanno Kautz told reporters in Berlin that “not many doses” have been destroyed so far, though he couldn't give an exact figure. But Kautz said that “we have more vaccine available at the moment than is being used and than we can donate.” He added that the U.N.-backed program to distribute shots to poorer countries, COVAX, isn't currently accepting donations.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-berlin-germany-europe-5ea8c217f112f2c3713fc4d5ad969923>

India extends COVID-19 boosters to all adults; some must pay

India began offering booster doses of COVID-19 vaccine to all adults on Sunday but limited free shots at government centers to front-line workers and people over age 60. The doses, which India is calling a “precautionary” shot instead of a booster, are available to people nine months after they receive their second jab, the Health Ministry said in a statement Friday. Those outside the two priority categories will need to pay for the shots at privately run facilities, the ministry said.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-business-india-dba574b2628fc7fe7c57415f7711f1f>

Partisan Exits

U.S. seeks to resume enforcing federal employee vaccine mandate

The U.S. Justice Department on Monday asked a federal appeals court to allow the Biden administration to resume enforcing a federal employee vaccine mandate that had been blocked by a lower-court judge in January. A 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals panel on Thursday reinstated President Joe Biden's executive order mandating that federal civilian employees be vaccinated against COVID-19.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-seeks-resume-enforcing-federal-employee-vaccine-mandate-2022-04-11/>

Covid threat being ignored in England for ideological reasons, say NHS leaders

Ministers should reconsider England's “living with Covid” plans, health leaders have said, while accusing the government of ignoring the ongoing threat for ideological reasons. The NHS Confederation, which represents organisations across the healthcare sector, has accused No 10 of having “abandoned any interest” in the pandemic, despite a new Omicron surge putting pressure on an already overstretched NHS. “The brutal reality for staff and patients is that this Easter in the NHS is as bad as any winter,” said Matthew Taylor, the chief executive of the NHS Confederation.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/apr/11/covid-threat-being-ignored-england-ideological-reasons-nhs-leader>

GP suspended for administering fake Covid-19 jabs allegedly charged between \$1000 and \$1500 a dose

General practitioner Jipson Quah, who has been suspended for administering fake Covid-19 jabs to some 15 patients, allegedly charged at least three people between \$1,000 and \$1,500 per dose. He also allowed at least 430 patients to take Covid-19 tests remotely, despite this being against the rules at the time. These offences are very serious and warrant Quah, 33, receiving the maximum suspension of 18 months, said the Singapore Medical Council (SMC) in its grounds of decision on the case, which was published online on Monday (April 11). It added that his actions put the general public at risk, and could have undermined confidence in the medical profession as well as Singapore's Covid-19 testing capabilities.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/health/doctor-suspended-for-administering-fake-covid-19-jabs-allegedly-charged-between-1000-and-1500-a-dose>

China labels U.S. concerns over COVID regulations 'groundless accusations'

China's foreign ministry expressed "strong dissatisfaction" with the United States late on Saturday after it raised concerns over China's coronavirus control measures. The U.S. State Department said on Friday that non-emergency staff at its Shanghai consulate and families of U.S. employees could leave due to a surge in COVID cases and coronavirus restrictions in the city. "We express strong dissatisfaction and firm opposition to the groundless accusations against China's pandemic prevention policy from the U.S. in its statement, and have lodged solemn representations," foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said in a statement.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-labels-us-concerns-over-covid-regulations-groundless-accusations-2022-04-10/>

Thousands rally in LA to oppose COVID-19 vaccine mandates

Thousands of people including truckers and firefighters from across the country gathered Sunday outside Los Angeles City Hall to protest vaccination mandates designed to slow the spread of COVID-19. The crowd gathered at Grand Park to hear speakers and performers, while big-rig trucks from the "People's Convoy" were parked on nearby streets. Members of the convoy jammed traffic during a Washington, D.C., protest earlier this year. The peaceful crowd gathered to hear speakers and singers and was similar to a rally held at the same spot last year and to others staged around the country. California battled a deadly winter coronavirus surge linked to the omicron variant but began easing masking and vaccination requirements this year as caseloads and hospitalization rates fell, which public health officials largely attributed to widespread vaccination and other safety measures.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-los-angeles-california-public-health-d3762de6c7343e9eba3f17cf05ad7ecc>

Continued Lockdown

China's Latest Covid-19 Lockdowns Begin to Drag on the Economy

China's strict Covid-19 lockdowns in Shanghai and other industrial hubs are beginning to weigh on its economy, with auto sales slumping and consumer prices rising the fastest in three months. Car sales in China dropped 10.5% year-over-year in March to 1.58 million vehicles as measures to contain the coronavirus outbreaks halted auto factories, slowed down car shipments and kept consumers from visiting car dealerships, the China Passenger Car Association said Monday. Separately, inflation rose by an annual 1.5% in March, the National Bureau of Statistics said Monday, the fastest year-over-year gain in three months, as city lockdowns drove up consumer prices.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-auto-sales-drop-more-than-10-as-covid-restrictions-hit-11649650032>

COVID-19: Shanghai close to 'civil unrest' as tensions build under strict lockdown regime

Shanghai feels close to a state of "civil unrest", people living there have told Sky News. One foreign resident of Puxi district, who wished to remain anonymous because of potential repercussions, said: "It's a dire situation here in Shanghai. "I've got friends who have run out of food, their communities don't help them as they are foreigners, no information to let us know what's going on and it seems more and more panic seems to be causing breakouts of fights between the locals as everyone is starving.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-shanghai-close-to-civil-unrest-as-tensions-build-under-strict-lockdown-regime-12588061>

China Banks Allow Shanghai Mortgage Delay as Covid Outbreak Worsens

China's largest banks are allowing residents in Shanghai to delay their mortgage payments as part of the nation's broader efforts to support the financial hub in its Covid fight. Lenders including Industrial & Commercial Bank of China Ltd. and Bank of Communications Co. are offering Shanghai clients a payment holiday on their mortgage loans for as long as three months. China Construction Bank Corp. allowed clients to delay their payment on both mortgage and consumer loans for up to 28 days while Bank of China Ltd. said any records of overdue payment due to the pandemic will be removed.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-11/china-banks-allow-mortgage-payment-holiday-in-covid-hit-shanghai>

Scientific Viewpoint

Ministry of Health announces third death linked to Covid-19 vaccine

The Ministry of Health has been notified of a third death the Vaccine Independent Safety Monitoring Board considered to be linked to the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine. The individual had myocarditis at the time of their death in December 2021. However, at the time, there was not enough information available to determine the potential role of the vaccine. In the weeks prior to their death, the individual had received a dose of the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine. The Board said the development of myocarditis was possibly due to vaccination with the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine, however, it does not impact or change the known information on myocarditis. Covid-19 is more likely to cause myocarditis than the vaccine, and the risk of Covid-19 far outweighs the risk of the vaccine. Of Kiwis aged 12 and older, 95 per cent have had two doses of the Covid vaccine, according to data from the Ministry of Health.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/coronavirus/300563840/ministry-of-health-announces-third-death-linked-to-covid19-vaccine>

Catalonia's Hipra Covid-19 vaccine could be on the market by June

The Covid-19 vaccine made by Catalan pharmaceutical company Hipra, which was found to generate more antibodies than the Pfizer jab, could be placed on the market by late May or early June, Spain's science minister Diana Morant said on Monday in an interview with public broadcaster TV3. The European Medicines Agency is currently conducting a rolling review of the protein-based vaccine that is intended to be used as a booster for adults who have already been fully vaccinated with other jabs. "Hipra is an example of a successful public-private partnership," Morant said. The Spanish government allocated €18 million towards its development. "We wish Hipra a lot of success with their vaccine that has many advantages over others that we've already been inoculated with," she added.

<https://www.catalannews.com/covid-19/item/catalonia-s-hipra-covid-19-vaccine-could-be-on-the-market-by-june>

Covid nasal spray could replace vaccine jabs as scientists rethink fight against virus

As the omicron variant of the coronavirus moved lightning-fast around the world, it revealed an unsettling truth. The virus had gained a stunning ability to infect people, jumping from one person's nose to the next. Cases soared this winter, even among vaccinated people. That is leading scientists

to rethink their strategy about the best way to fight future variants, by aiming for a higher level of protection: blocking infections altogether. If they succeed, the next vaccine could be a nasal spray. The original coronavirus shots proved remarkably versatile, protecting people from the worst outcomes of Covid-19.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/covid-nasal-spray-omicron-vaccine-b2055518.html>

Moderna and Rovi Pharma recall Covid-19 vaccine doses

Moderna and Rovi Pharma have recalled a batch of 764,900 doses of the Moderna Covid-19 vaccine, Spikevax. The move comes after a foreign body was detected in one of the vials from the batch produced at Rovi's contract manufacturing site in Spain. The company noted that the contaminated vial was punctured and was not used for administration to people. Moderna's marketing authorisation holders Moderna Biotech Spain and Rovi were informed of the issue through a complaint on the product from an inoculation centre in Málaga, Spain.

<https://www.pharmaceutical-technology.com/news/moderna-rovi-recall-vaccines/>

Heart issues after COVID-19 uncommon in children and young adults, more research needed

Heart complications are uncommon, yet treatable for children and young adults after COVID-19 disease or SARS-CoV-2 infection, according to a new scientific statement from the American Heart Association that details what has been learned about how to treat, manage and even prevent cardiovascular complications from the SARS-CoV-2 virus in youth. The statement published today in the Association's flagship journal *Circulation*. The latest data also indicate returning to sports and strenuous physical activities after heart symptoms resolve is safe, though additional screening may be considered for youth who experience more severe symptoms.

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-04-heart-issues-covid-uncommon-children.html>

WHO says it is analysing two new Omicron COVID sub-variants

The World Health Organization said on Monday it is tracking a few dozen cases of two new sub-variants of the highly transmissible Omicron strain of the coronavirus to assess whether they are more infectious or dangerous. It has added BA.4 and BA.5, sister variants of the original BA.1 Omicron variant, to its list for monitoring. It is already tracking BA.1 and BA.2 - now globally dominant - as well as BA.1.1 and BA.3. The WHO said it had begun tracking them because of their "additional mutations that need to be further studied to understand their impact on immune escape potential".

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/who-says-it-is-analysing-two-new-omicron-covid-sub-variants-2022-04-11/>

GlaxoSmithKline, CureVac and BioNTech clinch German pandemic preparedness contracts

As CureVac and GlaxoSmithKline mulligan with a second-generation COVID-19 vaccine, the partners have signed on for a German pandemic contingency plan to earmark mRNA production capacity for years to come. The contract with the German federal government will see GSK and CureVac supply mRNA vaccines "within a broader tender for pandemic preparedness in Germany." After a maximum two-year setup period, the companies will provide the German government with access to CureVac's manufacturing capacity until 2029. Under the deal, CureVac and GSK will be able to swiftly deploy 80 million mRNA shot doses annually "during the remainder of the current pandemic or in future infectious disease outbreaks," the partners said in a release Monday. The move seeks to counter the sort of supply bottlenecks that were commonplace in the pandemic's early days, the partners added. With GSK and Curevac's mRNA muscle on retainer, Germany will pay the partners an annual standby fee, following successful setup, which entails maintaining production capacity "at constant readiness."

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/glaxosmithkline-and-curevac-clinch-contract-earmark-german-mrna-vaccine-c>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Taiwan reports 630 new COVID-19 cases, including 439 domestic

Taiwan reported 630 new COVID-19 cases on Monday -- 439 domestically transmitted and 191 that originated abroad -- and no new deaths from the disease, according to the Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC). It marked the 11th consecutive day that new domestic infections exceeded 100 and the third straight day they went past 400. New Taipei had the highest number of new domestic cases, with 145, followed by Taipei with 100, and Keelung with 36. Kaohsiung reported 32 cases, Taoyuan 25, Hualien County 21, Yilan County 14, and Hsinchu County 12, while 10 each were reported in Hsinchu City and Pingtung County.

<https://focustaiwan.tw/society/202204110011>

More people in hospital with COVID-19 just days before mask mandates set to go

South Australia has recorded the highest number of COVID-related hospitalisations since February 1, just days out from the expected easing of mask rules. There are 236 people with COVID-19 in hospital – an increase of 14 since yesterday's figures. It is the highest figure since February 1, when 273 people were in hospital. Thirteen people are in intensive care, with two on ventilators. The number of new cases remained steady with 4,281 new infections reported and no deaths.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-04-11/sa-records-4281-covid-19-cases-and-no-deaths/100981390>

COVID-19 infections switch from young to older people as hospital cases spike to record level

Tasmania's COVID-19 hospitalisation rate has reached its highest level since the pandemic began, with experts saying that is due to increasing numbers of older Tasmanians becoming infected. Monday's figures show that 56 COVID-positive patients are in hospital, with 27 being treated specifically for symptoms of the virus. It's the highest number of COVID-related hospital admissions in the state since the pandemic began, eclipsing the previous high of 44 recorded last Tuesday. Royal Australian College of General Practitioners chairman Tim Jackson said younger adults had predominantly caught the virus soon after the December 15 border reopening, but that it had spread to older Tasmanians since the school year began.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-04-11/hospital-covid-19-cases-at-record-high-in-tasmania/100698750>

Covid-19 Cases Up 49% In NYC, Mayor Eric Adams Tests Positive

With the more transmissible BA.2 Omicron subvariant spreading, the lack of a truly proactive surveillance system, and many people being more lax about Covid-19 precautions, things can change in a New York minute. And now, surprise, surprise, New York City (NYC) is experiencing an uptick in Covid-19 cases. Over the past two weeks, the average number of new reported Covid-19 cases per day has gone up by 49% to 1,688, according to data from The New York Times. In fact, over that same time period, this number for all of New York state has increased by 61% to 4,238 with Covid-19-related hospitalizations edging up by 2%.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/brucelee/2022/04/10/covid-19-cases-up-49-in-nyc-mayor-eric-adams-tests-positive/>

Covid-19: Hospital and ambulance services struggle with huge demand and staff illness

Hospitals and ambulance services in England are facing “extreme pressures” and a high volume of staff absences, forcing some to declare critical incidents and others to warn of 12 hour waits for patients in hospital emergency departments. Portsmouth’s Queen Alexandra Hospital and South Central Ambulance Service both declared critical incidents on 6 April, with the hospital warning, “Our beds are full and our emergency department remains full with patients requiring admission . . . We are only able to treat patients with life threatening conditions and injuries.”¹ The ambulance service reported a “large volume of calls being received throughout the day and into the night and

increased challenges in releasing some of our ambulances from busy acute hospitals

<https://www.bmj.com/content/377/bmj.o950>

Japan reports first case of COVID variant XE

The Japanese health ministry on Monday reported the country's first case of coronavirus variant XE, in a woman who arrived at a Narita airport from the United States on March 26.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japan-reports-first-case-covid-variant-xe-2022-04-11/>

Italy reports 53253 coronavirus cases, 90 deaths on Sunday

Italy reported 53,253 COVID-19 related cases on Sunday, down from 63,992 the day before, the health ministry said, while the number of deaths fell to 90 from 112. Italy has registered 160,748 deaths linked to COVID-19 since its outbreak emerged in February 2020, the second-highest toll in Europe after Britain and the eighth highest in the world. Some 352,265 tests for COVID-19 were carried out in the past day, well below the previous day's 438,449, the health ministry said. Patients in hospital with COVID-19 - excluding those in intensive care - edged up to 10,038 on Sunday, from 10,023 a day earlier.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/italy-reports-53253-coronavirus-cases-90-deaths-sunday-2022-04-10/>

Shanghai's COVID infections rise as city looks to get moving again

China's financial centre of Shanghai started easing its lockdown in some areas on Monday despite reporting a record of more than 25,000 new COVID-19 infections, as authorities sought to get the city moving again after more than two weeks. Pressure has been mounting on authorities in China's most populous city, and one of its wealthiest, from residents growing increasingly frustrated as the curbs dragged on, leaving some struggling to find enough food and medicine. City officials announced on Monday morning that they were grouping residential units into three risk categories as a step towards allowing "appropriate activity" by those in neighbourhoods with no positive cases during a two-week stretch, adding that district authorities would publish further details.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghais-covid-infections-rise-city-looks-get-moving-again-2022-04-11/>

China Covid Outbreak Spreads in Shanghai With Over 26,000 Cases

China's largest Covid-19 outbreak in two years continues to spread despite an extended lockdown of Shanghai's 25 million people, with the restrictions weighing on a fragile economy and straining global supply chains. There were 26,087 new daily infections reported in the Chinese financial hub Sunday, an all-time high. Residents have been locked down for weeks now, with frustration building among the population as they struggle to get access to food and medical care. Elsewhere, the southern metropolis of Guangzhou is implementing a series of restrictions after local authorities warned the 20 cases they found last week could be the tip of the iceberg.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-11/shanghai-covid-infections-top-26-000-as-city-s-outbreak-grows>

The BA.2 Variant Is Spreading. Do You Need to Worry?

You're going to the movies and eating indoors. Your kid stopped wearing a mask to school; you no longer wear one to work. After two years of Covid precautions, you finally feel normal again. Well, mostly. BA.2—a subvariant of the Omicron variant that tore through the U.S. this winter—is spreading. It's now the dominant variant throughout the country and has triggered recent surges in Europe. If you live somewhere where local statistics suggest cases are rising but the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention map still shades your county low-risk green, it can be tough to figure out what to do. So, do you need to worry? When? And how do you know what to look for?

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-ba-2-variant-is-spreading-do-you-need-to-worry-11649556811>

New Lockdown

Guangzhou closes to most arrivals as China's outbreak grows

The manufacturing hub of Guangzhou closed itself to most arrivals Monday as China battles a major

COVID-19 surge in its big eastern cities. Shanghai has taken the brunt of the rise, with another 26,087 cases announced on Monday, only 914 of which showed symptoms. The city of 26 million is under a tight lockdown, with many residents confined to their homes for up to three weeks and concerns growing over the effect on the economy of China's largest city. The financial hub has seen international events canceled because of the crackdown, and local football club Shanghai Port has been forced to withdraw from the Asian Champions League because travel restrictions prevented it from attending games in Thailand.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-business-guangzhou-beijing-e4c1df45c9906cd6818ddeee4d855b3e>