

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

31st Oct 2022

Lockdown Exit

Wuhan Locks Down Part of City Center as Covid Cases Emerge

Wuhan locked down one of its central districts after Covid cases were found, as China persists with a zero-tolerance approach to the virus almost three years since the pathogen first emerged in the city. The roughly 900,000 residents of Hanyang district were told to stay in their homes from Wednesday, a spokeswoman from the area's CDC told Bloomberg News by phone. Another official at Hanyang's health bureau said the lockdown would last until Sunday, and that all non-essential businesses had been told to shut. Supermarkets and pharmacies will remain operational.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-10-26/china-s-wuhan-locks-down-part-of-city-center-as-covid-cases-emerge>

China Ramps Up Lockdowns, Covid Restrictions Across Country

Article reports that investors hoped China would ease its stringent Covid Zero strategy once the pivotal Communist Party congress cemented President Xi Jinping's grip on power. Instead, the opposite seems to be happening. Fresh lockdowns are being imposed from Wuhan, Covid's original epicenter, to China's industrial belt on the east coast. Schools and dining in at restaurants in the southern manufacturing powerhouse of Guangzhou have been suspended, while targeted shutdowns in the metropolises of Beijing and Shanghai continue, with apartment blocks and neighborhoods subject to stay-at-home orders if even a close contact of someone infected has visited.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-10-28/china-ramps-up-lockdowns-covid-restrictions-across-country>

Covid-19 Rules Take Shine Off Hong Kong's Bid to Reopen

Hong Kong will attempt to show it is back in business with a financial summit and premier rugby tournament next week, as strict pandemic controls have led to an exodus of talent and business from the city. But with most visitors still being forced to take PCR tests on arrival and banned from bars and restaurants for three days, business leaders say the two events intended to serve as marquee attractions for the Asian financial hub are likely to fall flat. "The overall feedback we got was: Thanks, but call us when you are actually opened up," Johannes Hack, president of the German Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, said of how people feel about business travel to the city. As long as the restrictions are in place, "no one can come to Hong Kong with the peace of mind that their schedule won't be impacted," he added.

https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-rules-take-shine-off-hong-kongs-bid-to-reopen-11667036658?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1

COVID-19: New report predicts how many daily cases there will be by February

Global coronavirus cases are projected to rise slowly in the coming months to about 18.7 million per day by February. The current daily average is around 16.7 million, according to the University of Washington report. It is far fewer than last winter when the Omicron variant pushed the estimated peak daily average to about 80 million - and the increase is also not expected to cause a big increase in deaths. The university's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) forecasts average deaths will rise from about 1,660 now to 2,748 on 1 February.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-new-report-predicts-how-many-daily-cases-there-will-be-by-february-12730396>

Biden gets latest COVID vaccine, urges Americans to do same

U.S. President Joe Biden rolled up his sleeve and received an updated COVID-19 vaccine on Tuesday,

using the occasion to urge more Americans to get the booster before the upcoming holiday season, especially seniors. "I'm calling on all Americans to get their shot just as soon as they can," Biden said shortly before a doctor gave him the new shot. With some Americans resistant to the vaccines, Biden urged them to put partisan politics aside, noting that more than 1 million people in the United States have died from COVID-19.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/biden-get-latest-covid-vaccine-urge-americans-do-same-2022-10-25/>

China's Shanghai Migrant Worker Villages Blamed for Covid Face Demolition

Tens of thousands of migrant workers in Shanghai, who have long been living on the margins in one of China's wealthiest cities, are facing renewed threats of eviction after their ramshackle villages were blamed for causing the Covid-19 outbreak that led to a monthslong lockdown. Like many other major Chinese cities, Shanghai has for years been razing and redeveloping the densely populated neighborhoods — known as “cheng zhong cun” or “villages within a city” — to make room for new residential and commercial complexes to drive growth in the world's second-largest economy. This year, the demolition in Shanghai is gathering pace.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2022-10-23/china-s-shanghai-migrant-worker-villages-blamed-for-covid-face-demolition>

Exit Strategies

China's 'Zero-COVID' Policy: An Economic Nightmare for Thailand

What will make or break the Thai economy, however, is the speed and extent of China's economic reopening. Thailand is, after all, heavily reliant on China in all dimensions: exports and imports, tourism, and investment. Needless to say, Thailand is extremely vulnerable to the CCP's sudden lockdown orders. Shanghai, for instance, accounts for 27 percent of Chinese exports to Thailand, and when the city was undergoing a strict two-month lockdown earlier this year, many Thai companies pretty much ran out of the materials necessary for the production of electric appliances such as air conditioners and cables. Similarly, the export of Thai durians – now one of Thailand's top exported products – to China was temporarily stopped back in April after the Chinese border inspectors detected traces of COVID-19.

<https://thediplomat.com/2022/10/chinas-zero-covid-policy-an-economic-nightmare-for-thailand/>

Shanghai orders mass testing in downtown Yangpu even as China's citizens hope for relaxed COVID-19 protocols

The lockdown is an echo of previous measures which led to a two-month lockdown of the entire city of 25 million.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-10-28/shanghai-lockdown-china-covid/101593008>

U.S. business sentiment in China hits record low as zero-COVID persists, survey shows

Optimism among U.S. businesses in China has hit record low levels, an annual survey showed on Friday, as competitive, economic, and regulatory challenges compound the stresses already imposed by Beijing's ongoing zero-COVID policies. Just 55% of 307 companies surveyed by the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai and consultancy PwC China described themselves as optimistic about the five-year business outlook. The reading is the lowest in the survey's 23-year history and worse than in 2020, when COVID-19 first surfaced, and during the trade standoff between Beijing and Washington in 2019.

<https://www.reuters.com/markets/us-business-sentiment-china-hits-record-low-zero-covid-persists-survey-2022-10-28/>

Coronavirus: Hong Kong to lift curbs on opening hours of restaurants, pubs and allow barbecue sites to resume operations from next Thursday

Hong Kong will lift its restrictions on the opening hours of restaurants, pubs and various other premises from next Thursday while barbecue sites under government management will also resume operations as the authorities further ease Covid-19 social-distancing measures. The announcement came as the city on Thursday logged 6,062 new coronavirus infections, the highest since September 19, while the number of serious cases and deaths remained stable.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/health-environment/article/3197447/coronavirus-hong-kong-lift-curbs-opening-hours-restaurants-pubs-and-allow-barbecue-sites-resume>

Math Scores Dropped in Every State During Pandemic, Report Card Shows

The nation's schools recorded the largest drop in math scores ever this year, with fourth- and eighth-grade students in nearly every state showing significant declines, according to Education Department data released Monday. In the most sweeping analysis of test scores since the start of the pandemic, the 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress, known as the Nation's Report Card, also revealed a nationwide plunge in reading that wiped out three decades of gains. Prepandemic declines in academic achievement intensified nationwide, and many longstanding gaps in student achievement grew.

https://news.google.com/_/i/rss/articles/CBMibWh0dHBzOi8vd3d3Lndzai5jb20vYXJ0aWNsZXMvbWF0aC1zY29yZXMtZHVjvCHBIZC1pbi1ldmVyeS1zdGF0ZS1kdXJpbmctcGFuZGVtaWMtcmVwb3J0LWNhcmQtc2hvd3MtMTE2NjY1ODQwNjLSAQA?oc=5

Pfizer COVID vaccine price hike to boost revenue for years, rivals may follow

Pfizer's plan to as much as quadruple U.S. prices for its COVID-19 vaccine next year is beyond Wall Street's expectations and will spur its revenue for years despite weaker than anticipated demand for the new booster shot so far, analysts said. The drugmaker, which developed and sells the vaccine with Germany's BioNTech, said on Thursday evening that it is targeting a range of \$110 to \$130 a dose for the vaccine once the United States moves to a commercial market next year.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/pfizer-covid-vaccine-price-hike-seen-giving-revenue-boost-years-2022-10-21/>

Partisan Exits

Shanghai Disneyland reduces operations as China tightens COVID curbs

Shanghai Disneyland will operate at reduced capacity from Saturday to comply with COVID-19 measures, the resort said in a statement, in another sign of tightening curbs across China as it seeks to contain the spread of coronavirus infections. The amusement park will operate with a reduced workforce on a temporary basis, which will have an impact on the operation of certain attractions, restaurants and shops, it said on its official Wechat account.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-disneyland-reduces-operations-china-tightens-covid-curbs-2022-10-29/>

Italy to end ban on health workers not vaccinated against Covid

Italian doctors and nurses suspended from work because they are not vaccinated against Covid-19 will soon be reinstated, new Health Minister Orazio Schillaci said on Friday. The move is motivated by a worrying shortage of medical personnel together with declining cases of Covid-19. The new government will also cancel fines imposed on all people aged over 50 who had not got vaccinated, he added. "A measure is being finalised that will allow the reintegration into service of health staff subject to suspension proceedings for non-compliance with compulsory vaccination before the expiry date of the suspension," he said in a statement posted on the ministry's website.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/italy-end-ban-health-workers-not-vaccinated-against-covid-2022-10-28/>

China's Covid Fight Disrupts Businesses, Food Supplies as Cases Spread

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-covid-fight-disrupts-businesses-food-supplies-as-cases-spread-11666879925>

Three years into the pandemic, China is sticking to its Covid Zero policy despite heavy economic costs, growing unrest and isolation from the rest of the world. Many expected President Xi Jinping to signal a pivot away from what has become a signature policy when he took the podium at the Communist Party's congress this month. Instead, he defended the zero-tolerance strategy as one that saves lives, but offered no steer on when it's likely to end. Xi's absolute control over the party leadership and China has left experts debating what that means for the future of an approach that's brought misery to millions. The brutal Shanghai lockdown earlier this year, overseen by Li Qiang — a Xi loyalist and China's likely premier from 2023 — saw businesses upended and the city's 25 million residents struggle to get even basic necessities.

Carnival has borrowed \$2bn through a bond offering that used a dozen of its ships as collateral, as it works to refinance its huge debt pile amassed during the pandemic. The world's largest cruise operator was able to borrow more than the \$1.25bn it had initially planned to raise and at a lower interest rate than Carnival was prepared to stomach just hours earlier, according to two people briefed on the deal.

Persistent worries about catching Covid kept about 3 million Americans out of the workforce, reducing the nation's economic output by \$250 billion in the first half of 2022, according to new research on a phenomenon dubbed "Long Social Distancing." Close to 60% of respondents to a monthly survey of tens of thousands of adults said they wouldn't completely return to pre-Covid activities like riding crowded subways and elevators, and were staying out of the labor force as a result. Those not working or looking for a job in part due to infection fears totaled about 2% of the labor force, which translated to the 3 million figure, the researchers found.

Researchers have identified in humans a pan-variant neutralising antibody, named S2X324, whose neutralizing potency was largely unaffected by any of the Omicron strains of the coronavirus, according to a study. The scientists show that this monoclonal antibody prevents binding to the receptor on host cells that the pandemic coronavirus usually commandeers. They also suggested that combining this antibody with others in a cocktail might reduce the chances of the virus becoming antibody treatment resistant. The international team from University of Washington and Howard Hughes Medical Institute, and Humabs BioMed SA of Vir Biotechnology in Switzerland looked

at several aspects of the effects of exposure to earlier forms of the SARS-CoV-2 spike antigen or immune-provoking protein -- on the immune system's reaction to the Omicron variants.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/scientists-identify-in-humans-neutralising-antibody-to-omicron-variants-122102900690_1.html

XBB Symptoms: 10 Nightmare COVID-19 Variant Illness Warning Signs

Dr. Martinello adds that the immune response to a COVID-19 illness is more than just antibodies against SARS-CoV-2 virus. "We also have a cellular response, and it's actually an area of immunology that we're not as easily able to test for, as we are for antibodies," he explains. "We don't know yet how well our cellular immunity is going to be able to respond." Staying up to date on vaccines is crucial at this point, as there is more than enough evidence to suggest that vaccines significantly reduce risk of serious illness, even if they don't always prevent infection

https://news.google.com/_i/rss/rd/articles/CBMiV2h0dHBzOi8vd3d3Lmdvb2Rob3VzZWt1ZXBpbmcuY29tL2h1YWx0aC9hNDE3OTE0NTcveGJlLWNvdmlkLW5pZ2h0bWVfYS12YXJpYW50LXN5bXB0b21zL9IBAA?oc=5

BQ omicron variant: Will cases spike in the US like they did in Europe?

Why the Europe-to-U.S. trend persists is complex, say experts I spoke with, and they emphasized that there's no definitive answer. "There are a lot of hypotheses out there that could explain it," says Lauren Ancel Meyers, director of the COVID-19 Modeling Consortium at the University of Texas in Austin. One major factor is global travel patterns. Europe is a linchpin of global travel, meaning waves that begin elsewhere in the world may tend to be channeled through Europe before reaching the United States. Based on common airline routes, it makes sense that COVID would have initially spread from Asia to Europe first. It also makes sense that delta, which originated in India, would have spread to the UK before reaching the United States, as India and the UK have closer travel ties.

https://news.google.com/_i/rss/rd/articles/CBMiTmh0dHBzOi8vc2xhdGUuY29tL3RIY2hub2xvZ3kvMjAyMi8xMC9vbWljcm9uLXZhcmlhbnQtZXVyb3BILWJxLXVzLXBhdHRlcm4uaHRtbNIBAA?oc=5

EU regulator recommends adding heavy periods to side effects of mRNA COVID shots

A European Medicines Agency (EMA) committee on Friday recommended adding heavy menstrual bleeding to the list of side effect of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines made by Moderna (MRNA.O), as well as Pfizer and its partner BioNTech. Reports of heavy periods - bleeding characterised by increased volume and/or duration that interferes with the quality of life - have been observed during clinical trials, from cases in the real world and in medical literature, the EMA said.

https://news.google.com/_i/rss/rd/articles/CBMiKQFodHRwciovL3d3dy5yZXV0ZXJzLmNvbS9idXNpbmVzcy9oZWZsdGh1YXJILXB0YXJtYWNldXRpY2Fscy9lbWEtcGFuZWwtbGlzdHMtaGVhdnktbWVuc3RydWFlsLWJsZWVkaW5nLXNpZGutZWZmZWNO0LW1vZGVybmEtcGZpemVvLXNob3RzLTlwMjltMTAtMjgvdG90G90EA?oc=5

U.S. government to test Pfizer's Paxlovid for long COVID

The U.S. National Institutes of Health's \$1 billion RECOVER Initiative has picked Pfizer Inc's antiviral drug Paxlovid as the first treatment it will study in patients with long COVID, organizers of the study said on Thursday. The complex medical condition involves more than 200 symptoms ranging from exhaustion and cognitive impairment to pain, fever and heart palpitations that can last for months and even years following a COVID-19 infection.

https://news.google.com/_i/rss/rd/articles/CBMidmh0dHBzOi8vd3d3LnJldXRlcnMuY29tL2J1c2luZXNzL2h1YWx0aG9hcnUtcGhhcm1hY2V1dGJlYXxzL3VzLWdvdmdVybml1bnQtdGVzdC1wZml6ZXJzLXBheGxvdmklLWxvbmctY292aWQ0MjAyMi0xMC0yNy_SAQA?oc=5

Two new Covid strains designated by UK health agency

Two new strains of Covid have been designated, the UK Health and Security Agency (UKHSA) has said. The strains, labelled BQ.1 and XBB, are Omicron variants, have not been designated as variants of concern, meaning they are not thought to be at particular risk of accelerating the spread of the illness. However, studies being conducted at the University of Oxford on behalf of the UKHSA

showed "significant reductions" in "neutralisation against several of the newly emergent variants". This could lead to waning immunity among the population, which could in turn "fuel future waves of SARS-CoV-2 infection," the agency said in a statement to ITV News,

<https://www.itv.com/news/2022-10-28/two-new-covid-strains-designated-by-uk-health-agency>

People who caught mild Covid had increased risk of blood clots, British study finds

Patients with mild Covid, defined as those not hospitalized, were 2.7 times more likely to develop blood clots, according to the study published in the British Medical Journal on Monday. Patients hospitalized with Covid were 27 times more likely to develop blood clots, 21 times more likely to suffer heart failure and 17 times more likely to have a stroke, according to the study. The risk of cardiovascular disease for mild and severe cases was highest in the first 30 days after infection.

https://news.google.com/_i/rss/rd/articles/CBMid2h0dHBzOi8vd3d3LmNuYmMuY29tLzlwMjlvMTAvMjUvcGVvcGxILXdo by1jYXVnaHQtbWlsZC1jb3ZpZC1oYWQtaW5jcmVhc2VkLXJpc2stb2YtYmxvb2QtY2xvdHMtYnJpdGlzaC1zdHVkeS1maW5 kcy5odG1s0gEA?oc=5

Possible RSV, Covid-19 and Flu Collision Has Doctors Worried. What to Know.

A possible convergence of flu, RSV and Covid-19 has doctors worried. Flu cases are rising earlier than usual, and pediatric hospitals are seeing surges of respiratory syncytial virus, commonly known as RSV. There are also signs that Covid-19 cases are increasing in parts of the country as Americans head into the cooler months. Covid-19 precautions earlier in the pandemic—and their near-disappearance lately—are a big part of the reason flu and RSV are staging a comeback, doctors say. Measures such as masking and social distancing suppressed rates of other viruses, too, leaving those of us who haven't had a recent infection with lower levels of protection now. "It's very clear that because people are relaxing Covid precautions that it's very likely we will also see an increase in influenza at the same time," says Jay Varma, director of the Cornell Center for Pandemic Prevention and Response in New York City and a physician and epidemiologist at Weill Cornell Medicine. All three viruses share similar symptoms, such as cough, sore throat, runny nose and fever, making it hard to tell what you have without a test. You can test for Covid-19 at home, and most health professionals can test for flu and RSV.

https://news.google.com/_i/rss/rd/articles/CBMiUGh0dHBzOi8vd3d3Lndzai5jb20vYXJ0aWNsZXMvcnN2LWZsdS1jb3Zp ZC10cmllwGVkZW1pYy1kb2N0b3JzLXdvcnJ5LTEXNjY2NmZmOTc10gEA?oc=5

Covid's Heart Effects: Infections Raise Clotting, Death Risks in Large Study

Covid-19 at any level of severity is linked to an increased risk of dangerous blood clots that start in patients' veins and travel to the heart, lungs and other parts of the body, according to a UK study that highlights the pandemic's role in driving up rates of cardiovascular disease. Non-hospitalized Covid patients were 2.7 times more likely to develop dangerous clots called venous thromboembolisms and were more than 10 times more likely to die than individuals who avoided the disease, scientists at Queen Mary University of London found in a study of almost 54,000 people followed for an average of about 4 1/2 months. The increase in risk was highest in the first 30 days after the disease began, but could remain elevated even longer, the researchers said.

https://news.google.com/_i/rss/rd/articles/CBMifWh0dHBzOi8vd3d3LmJsbn29tYmVyZy5jb20vbmV3cy9hcnRpY2xlcy8y MDIyLTUwLTI0L2NvdmlkLXMTaGVhcnQtZWZmZW50cy1pbmZlY3Rpb25zLXJhaXNlLW50aW5nLWRIYXRoLXJpc2tzp WluLWxhcmlkLXN0dWR50gEA?oc=5

Omicron mutates again: What we know about 3 new subvariants

The omicron variant of COVID-19 has once again evolved, spawning new versions of itself with slight mutations that could make the virus more transmissible or more dangerous. With each new subvariant comes a new mixture of letters and numbers. BA.5 is still the dominant variant in the U.S., according to the latest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, but two new subvariants are rising up the ranks: BQ.1 and BQ.1.1.

https://news.google.com/_i/rss/rd/articles/CBMic2h0dHBzOi8vdGhlaGlsc5jb20vaG9tZW5ld3MvbmV4c3Rhcl9tZWRpYV93aXJlLzMDI5MDUtb21pY3Jvbi1tdXRhdGVzLWFnYWluLXdoYXQtd2Uta25vdy1hYm91dC0zLW5ldy1zdWJ2YXJpYW50cy_SAQA?oc=5

New Covid Boosters Aren't Better Than Old Ones, Study Finds

Bivalent booster shots from Moderna Inc. and Pfizer Inc. failed to raise levels of protective proteins called neutralizing antibodies against the dominant omicron strains any more than four doses of the original Covid vaccine, according to an early independent study on a small group of people. Researchers at Columbia University and the University of Michigan compared levels of neutralizing antibodies in blood samples from 21 people who got a fourth shot of the Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech SE bivalent boosters against antibody levels in 19 people who got four shots of the original vaccines. Three to five weeks after a fourth shot, those people who received the new boosters aimed at BA.4 and BA.5 variants “had similar neutralizing antibody titers as those receiving a fourth monovalent mRNA vaccine,” the authors conclude in a manuscript posted on the preprint server bioRxiv.org.

https://news.google.com/_i/rss/rd/articles/CBMif2h0dHBzOi8vd3d3LmJsbn29tYmVyZy5jb20vbmV3cy9hcnRyY2xlcY8yMDlyLTFEwLTI1L25ldy1ib29zdGVycy1mcm9tLW1vZGVybmEtYW5kLXBmaXplci1hcmVuLXQtYmV0dGVyLXRoYW4tb2xkLW9uZXMtc3R1ZHZhktc2hvd3PSAQA?oc=5

COVID disrupted measles vaccinations in Africa and now cases are surging

Fall waited with dozens of mothers and babies in the flooded courtyard of Bundung Hospital. Then a doctor emerged with bad news. The hospital had run out of measles vaccines, and it wasn't clear when they would receive more. After what health experts call the biggest backslide in a generation, 26 large or disruptive measles outbreaks have sprung up worldwide, according to the World Health Organization. A devastating outbreak in Zimbabwe has killed more than 700 children this year, chiefly among religious sects that do not believe in vaccinations. Now African health systems remain especially vulnerable due to a lack of funds and manpower, particularly in countries where conflict and malnutrition make children more vulnerable to deadly infection, according to Reuters interviews with more than a dozen disease experts, doctors and global health officials.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/covid-disrupted-measles-vaccinations-africa-now-cases-are-surging-2022-10-24/>

Coronavirus Resurgence

XBB variant, spreading fast in Singapore, detected in Tokyo

Six cases of the highly transmissible coronavirus variant XBB have been detected in Tokyo, according to the metropolitan government's COVID-19 infection monitoring committee. XBB — a virus formed from a combination of the omicron subvariants BA.2.75 and BA.2 — was first reported by Singapore in September and has since been confirmed in 35 countries. The subvariant features several mutations in its spike protein — the part of the coronavirus that latches onto cells to gain entry — giving it an exceptional ability to evade immunity acquired through past infections or vaccination. But its severity is not yet known, the monitoring committee said Thursday.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/10/28/national/xbb-subvariant-tokyo-cases/>

China locks down part of Wuhan, nearly three years after first Covid case emerged

Chinese cities from Wuhan in central China to Xining in the north-west are doubling down on Covid-19 curbs, sealing up buildings, locking down districts and throwing millions into distress in a scramble to halt widening outbreaks. China on Thursday reported a third straight day of more than 1,000 new Covid cases nationwide, a modest tally compared with the tens of thousands a day that sent Shanghai into a full-blown lockdown earlier this year but enough to trigger more curbs and restrictions across the country. Wuhan, site of the world's first Covid-19 outbreak in late 2019, reported about 20 to 25 new infections a day this week. The city has registered 240 cases over the past 14 days. Local authorities ordered more than 800,000 people in one district to stay at home

until 30 October.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/27/china-locks-down-part-of-wuhan-nearly-three-years-after-first-covid-case-emerged>

Pfizer's (PFE) Paxlovid Given Less Often to Black, Hispanic People

Pfizer Inc.'s Paxlovid antiviral was prescribed to Black and Hispanic Covid-19 patients at much lower rates than those who were White, according to a study that calls into question efforts to bolster access to drugs that fight the coronavirus. From April to July, as Paxlovid's use peaked, Black US patients received it about a third less often than White patients, according to the report published Thursday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Stark disparities were also seen among Hispanic patients, who were nearly 30% less likely to get Paxlovid than White patients. Asian people were prescribed the drug about 19% less frequently than White counterparts.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-10-27/pfizer-s-pfe-paxlovid-given-less-often-to-black-hispanic-people>

Global COVID cases will increase in coming months, but at a slower pace -report

Daily global COVID-19 infections are projected to rise slowly to about 18.7 million by February from the current 16.7 million average daily cases, driven by the northern hemisphere's winter months, the University of Washington said in an analysis. Far fewer infections are expected than last winter's estimated peak daily average of about 80 million cases in January of 2022 that was driven by the rapid spread of the Omicron variant, according to the report.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/no-surge-expected-global-covid-cases-this-winter-ihme-report-2022-10-25/>

Carnival's Costa Cruises Pulls Asia Trips as China's Covid Zero Policy Bites

Costa Cruises, a unit of cruising giant Carnival Corp. that targets the nascent Chinese market, is canceling all future Asia departures amid waning expectations Beijing will ease its zero-tolerance Covid policy and border restrictions any time soon. Port stops in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Japan and South Korea will be canceled since international cruises in those locations still haven't resumed, the Genoa, Italy-based company said in a statement, adding that it's reorganizing its business in the region.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-10-24/carnival-cruise-unit-pulls-asia-trips-as-china-covid-zero-bites>

A new Omicron variant, BQ.1.1, is spreading throughout France

Detected in France in September, a new subvariant of Omicron named "BQ.1.1" is continuing its inexorable progression, seemingly set to supplant the BA.5 variant of Omicron, which is currently in the majority. BQ.1.1 derives from the sublineage BQ.1, which itself originated from BA.5. The new variant appears to have emerged in Nigeria in July. It has since spread to Europe, including France, Belgium, Denmark and Italy, as well as to other countries, including Japan, the United States and Australia.

https://www.lemonde.fr/en/environment/article/2022/10/25/a-new-omicron-variant-bq-1-1-is-spreading-throughout-france_6001720_114.html