

Connecting Communities for COVID19 News

4th Jan 2021

Isolation Tips

What can we learn from the great WFH experiment?

...I mention this because we are at a turning point in the pandemic. Many people, myself included, have largely been working from home. For months it has been hard to shake the feeling that this will last for ever. Now we are contemplating a vaccine-fuelled return to normality — maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but soon. What the 2014 Tube strike teaches us is that temporary disruptions can have permanent effects. Sometimes there are scars that do not heal; sometimes a crisis teaches us lessons we can use when it has passed.

<https://www.ft.com/content/0cb2ead1-59f8-4d59-9ed8-c76358f68bc4>

Hygiene Helpers

LA begins issuing digital vaccine verification for Apple Wallet

LA will begin offering the digital receipts for vaccination starting this week. Plan is being carried out in partnership with tech company Healthvana. It's initially aimed at ensuring people get the correct second dose of vaccine. But critics fear a looming system of 'vaccine passports' required for travel. Raises questions about civil rights and people with immunity after infection

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9100029/LA-begins-issuing-digital-vaccine-verification-Apple-Wallet.html>

Coronavirus: UK sets up more than 20 Covid test sites for France-bound hauliers

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

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55516285>

Community Activities

The 'Healthy Building' Surge Will Outlast the Pandemic

Over the past several months, the Covid-19 pandemic has sparked a surge of interest in the role that indoor environments—where we spend 90 percent of our time, even in a normal year—play in our health. Suddenly, developers and CEOs are realizing that incorporating health concerns in a building's design isn't a luxury. It's a necessity. "People are really thinking about, 'Are these spaces safe? Are they healthy? How could I improve them?'" says Rick Cook, a founding partner of the New York-based architectural firm COOKFOX. Cook and other architects have been working with the International WELL Building Institute, an organization that's developing standards for healthy buildings. Since the pandemic, the Institute has been registering more than a million square feet of real estate a day in its certification program, putting buildings on the path to wellness

<https://www.wired.com/story/healthy-building-outlast-pandemic/>

Yorkshire theatres reflect on a tough year - but the show must go on in 2021

It has been a tough year for our theatres but, as Nick Ahad reports, the energy and verve with which they have reacted, plus the public's support, gives hope for the future.

<https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/people/yorkshire-theatres-reflect-tough-year-show-must-go-2021-3076081>

Vaccine passports, travel bubbles, pricey flights: the future of Asian tourism?

The coronavirus has changed the industry, forcing companies and countries alike to pivot from their existing models in a region where tourism is a huge economic driver. But catering to local travellers cannot fully make up for the downturn, experts say, while changing appetites and abundant concerns mean the future is anything but certain

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/economics/article/3116142/vaccine-passports-domestic-tourism-pricey-flights-future-travel>

UK public transport downturn to continue after pandemic ends

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

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

Pope criticises people going on holiday to flee COVID lockdowns

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

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-pope/pope-criticises-people-going-on-holiday-to-flee-covid-lockdowns-idUKKBN2980BT>

Working Remotely

A third of Irish staff will still work remotely in 2023, survey finds

A third of full-time employees will still be working remotely by 2023, compared to just 2pc three years ago, according to a new survey. But only one in 10 organisations surveyed in Ireland today have structures that can support the development of a flexible and agile workforce, according to the latest Flexible Work and Rewards Survey. The Covid pandemic pushed the number of remote workers to 49pc in 2020 and this would remain high, at 33pc, in two years time, the survey found.

<https://www.msn.com/en-ie/finance/news/a-third-of-irish-staff-will-still-work-remotely-in-2023-survey-finds/ar-BB1cqo1D>

The working world is still getting used to Zoom life

Remote working in New Zealand really kicked off in March, with the nationwide lockdown in response to rapidly growing coronavirus case numbers, but most of the rest of the world had been logging into Zoom months earlier. Analysis from economics consultancy, Infometrics found close to a third of the country's workforce was able to operate from home during lockdown. (Many businesses reported employees were just as - if not more - productive while working remotely.) Even after restrictions were eased in May and businesses were able to reopen, many people continued working

from home.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/123804919/the-working-world-is-still-getting-used-to-zoom-life>

Is your employer spying on you as you work from home?

Covid-19 has shifted the ground beneath us and things that were once de rigueur will not remain so — among them office work as we knew it. Companies keeping tabs on their workers is not new. Call-centre operators have long used software to track employees' calls. Those tools, however, are now being applied across a swathe of industries. And they are far more powerful than they used to be, because these days we are all tethered in one way or another to the mothership: the internet. The dangers here are many. For one, these tools often reduce one's entire day — eight or ten hours of work sprinkled with visits to Twitter and Spotify and chats around the (digital) watercooler — into a score, a single number that sums up one's value to an enterprise.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/is-your-employer-spying-on-you-as-you-work-from-home-5pdglfpp0>

Is a Home Office Actually More Productive? Some Workers Think So.

Some Americans have a new outlook on remote working: They prefer it. In June and July, a group of 1,388 people working from home were asked for their impressions of the experience by workplace consulting firm Global Workplace Analytics and video technology company Owl Labs. The new arrangement, it turns out, suited many of them. While roughly 27% said they would have considered such a setup to be ideal before the coronavirus pandemic started, 80% said they would like to continue working remotely for three days of the week or more once the pandemic is over. Many of these people said they would prefer remote work all five days of the workweek.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/is-a-home-office-actually-more-productive-some-workers-think-so-11609563632>

Widespread working from home set to continue in 2021

Widespread working from home has been one of the biggest behavioural changes of 2020 in the UK, with scores of offices still empty and employees facing months more away from their desks. In efforts to curb the spread of the coronavirus back in March 2020, Prime Minister Boris Johnson advised the public to work from home where possible. Nearly half (46.6%) of all those in employment did at least some work at home the following month, according to the Office for National Statistics. Dr Alan Redman, an organisational psychologist, said policy makers and employers need to ensure staff are fully equipped to work from home in the long-term.

<https://www.itv.com/news/2021-01-02/covid-widespread-working-from-home-set-to-continue-in-2021>

Virtual Classrooms

Primary schools reopening: Call for remote learning as Covid cases rise

In England, pressure is growing on the government to keep all schools closed for two weeks after the Christmas break amid a surge in coronavirus cases. Teaching unions have told primary school staff it is unsafe to return to work, and called for remote learning. Head teachers have begun legal action to force ministers to reveal data behind the decision for some schools to reopen on Monday. The government said decisions are based on new infections and NHS pressure.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-55511662>

Covid: Keep primaries closed call - as NEU members told of 'legal rights'

A teaching union in England is calling for the closure of Isle of Wight primary schools for at least a fortnight, from Monday. The government announced this week (Wednesday, December 30) that most would reopen as normal from January 4 (though some in the worst affected areas of England would remain shut). London primary schools will now also stay shut after a government u-turn after nine followed a letter to Education Secretary Gavin Williamson, from nine local authority leaders in the capital. Now, teaching unions are calling for all primary schools in England - including the Island's - to move to online learning for at least 2 weeks.

<https://www.countypress.co.uk/news/18982551.covid-close-primaries-call---teachers-told-legal-rights/>

10 team-building activities to help during virtual learning

As a teacher, team building is something that comes naturally. We do it to break the ice at the beginning of the year, to build a community in our classroom, and as a brain break when our kids (or the teachers) need a break. Now that we are all learning and teaching from home, building a community and connecting with our kids is a little harder with distance learning factored in. Here are 10 excellent team-building strategies to keep the kids engaged and having fun all while learning a little more about their classmates and building a better community.

<https://www.eschoolnews.com/2020/12/31/10-team-building-activities-to-help-during-virtual-learning/>

Virtual learning a 'nightmare' for special education students amid pandemic, parents say

The coronavirus pandemic has disrupted education for every student in Michigan this year as K-12 schools have transitioned in and out of remote learning since March in response to the pandemic. While educators have recognized that all students struggle with remote learning, there has been one group of students for whom they say online learning has proven to be virtually impossible – students with special needs. At school, special needs students rely on personal, hands-on attention from trained specialists. The tools that other children are using for remote learning such as Zoom often aren't accessible.

<https://www.mlive.com/news/2021/01/virtual-learning-a-nightmare-for-special-education-students-amid-pandemic-parents-say.html>

Frustrations of a CPS special ed parent: 'Why are other kids reading and not my son?'

Remote learning has opened a window for parents to peer into their students' classrooms, which was difficult to do before the coronavirus pandemic. At Chicago Public Schools, some parents of children with disabilities say they are disheartened by services they believe fail to meet students' needs and are upset by the low expectations some educators have for their children. Mo Buti, who founded a Chicago advocacy organization, AiepA, for people with autism and other disabilities, said her clients observing their children's virtual classes are realizing they aren't always being challenged in school.

<https://chicago.suntimes.com/education/2021/1/3/22175005/coronavirus-remote-learning-chicago-public-schools-special-ed-education-cps>

Transitioning from virtual, in-home learning to hybrid or full-time classroom learning

This month, some Minnesota students will be going back to learning in the classroom instead of all virtual learning at home. KSTP's Brandi Powell talked with a mental health expert about how to help kids with the transition. Dr. Anne Gearity is with the University of Minnesota Department of Psychiatry and is a mental health practitioner. "Some children are not looking forward to coming back. There are children who I know who say academically it's hard, but for some children socially it was hard," Dr. Gearity said.

<https://kstp.com/news/transitioning-back-from-virtual-in-home-distance-learning-to-hybrid-full-time-classroom-learning/5965609/>

Public Policies

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

Zimbabwe extended a nationwide curfew, banned gatherings and ordered non-essential businesses closed for a month on Saturday in an effort to curb a surge in coronavirus infections. Vice President Constantino Chiwenga, who is also health minister, said some of the tighter restrictions were effective immediately and included a 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew and a ban on inter-city travel. From Tuesday, non-essential businesses would also be suspended, he said. "People must stay at home save for buying food and medicines or transporting sick relatives," Chiwenga told a news

conference.

<https://in.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-zimbabwe-lockdown/overwhelmed-zimbabwe-tightens-covid-19-restrictions-orders-most-businesses-closed-idINKBN29802G?il=0>

Norway imposes new restrictions to prevent new wave, says PM

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

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-norway-idUSKBN2980IC>

Germany poised to extend coronavirus lockdown

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

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-germany-idUKKBN2980BF>

Coronavirus: Medics complain of 'bureaucracy' in bid to join Covid vaccine effort

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

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55516277>

Timeline: India's coronavirus vaccine approved by drugs experts

India's drugs regulator on Saturday recommended for emergency use a locally developed coronavirus vaccine called COVAXIN, which is expected to be a backup to the AstraZeneca/Oxford shot. Not much is known about the safety and efficacy of COVAXIN. The company says it has submitted all data to the drugs regulator. The head of India's drugs regulator is expected to share details about it at a news conference on Sunday, when its formal approval is likely to be announced.

https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-india-covaxin-timelin-idUSKBN29801B?taid=5ff12d5b3ec0900001eb334d&utm_campaign=trueAnthem:+Trending+Content&utm_medium=trueAnthem&utm_source=twitter

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

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government will ask the central government later on Saturday to declare a state of emergency following a resurgence of COVID-19 cases, local media reported. Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike will make the request in a meeting with Economy Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura, who coordinates government measures to fight the pandemic, the Nikkei newspaper said, citing multiple sources. Calls by Reuters to the governor's office were not answered.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-tokyo-emergency/tokyo-to-request-new-emergency-declaration-as-c>

[ovid-19-cases-climb-media-idUKKBN29701R](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/india-tests-vaccine-delivery-system-with-nationwide-trial-vaccine-coronavirus-pandemic-vaccine-covid-new-delhi-b1781435.html?utm_content=Echobox&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1609579411)

India tests vaccine delivery system with nationwide trial

India tested its COVID-19 vaccine delivery system with a nationwide trial on Saturday as it prepares to roll out an inoculation program to stem the coronavirus pandemic. The trial included data entry into an online platform for monitoring vaccine delivery, along with testing of cold storage and transportation arrangements for the vaccine, the health ministry said in a statement. The massive exercise came a day after a government-appointed panel of experts held a meeting to review the applications of potential vaccine candidates, including front-runner Covishield, developed by Oxford University and U.K.-based drugmaker AstraZeneca. India's vaccination drive is expected to start in a few days once the country's regulator approves a vaccine.

https://www.independent.co.uk/news/india-tests-vaccine-delivery-system-with-nationwide-trial-vaccine-coronavirus-pandemic-vaccine-covid-new-delhi-b1781435.html?utm_content=Echobox&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1609579411

Australia's NSW tightens restrictions as virus cluster expands

Australia's most populous state of New South Wales on Saturday made masks compulsory and imposed new restrictions as its coronavirus cluster expanded by seven, while neighbouring Victoria recorded 10 new locally acquired COVID-19 cases. NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian banned dancing and singing at night clubs while restricting numbers at gym classes, weddings, funerals and places of worship. However, the five-day Cricket test match between Australia and India, scheduled to begin on Thursday, will go ahead with attendance at 50% capacity.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-australia/australias-nsw-tightens-restrictions-as-virus-cluster-expands-idUKKBN29700F?il=0>

Covid-19 in Scotland: All Scots over 50 will receive vaccine by the spring

All Scots over the age of 50 will receive the coronavirus vaccine by the spring, the health secretary has promised. The first doses of the Oxford University-Astrazeneca shot will be administered from Monday. Jeane Freeman said that initially the injections would be given in a supervised setting near hospitals but would then move to GP surgeries and community hubs

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/scotland/covid-19-in-scotland-all-scots-over-50-will-receive-vaccine-by-the-spring-6g0d9rwxn>

WHO lists Pfizer-BioNTech COVID vaccine for emergency use

The World Health Organization has listed Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use, a critical step that the United Nations health agency said aims to make the vaccine more readily available in developing nations. In a statement on Thursday, WHO said its validation of the vaccine – the first since the start of the pandemic – “opens the door for countries to expedite their own regulatory approval processes to import and administer the vaccine”.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/31/who-lists-pfizer-biontech-covid-vaccine-for-emergency-use>

Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine rollout plan changed following approval

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

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/dec/30/oxford-astrazeneca-covid-vaccine-approved-by-uk-regulator>

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

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

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

Maintaining Services

Schools are safe, say PM Johnson as COVID-19 cases surge

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Sunday tougher lockdown restrictions were probably on the way as COVID-19 cases keep rising, but that schools were safe and children should continue to attend where permitted. COVID-19 cases in Britain are at record levels and the increase in numbers is fuelled by a new and more transmissible variant of the virus. The government has cancelled the planned reopening of schools in and around London but teaching unions want wider closures.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-britain/schools-are-safe-say-uk-pm-johnson-as-covid-19-cases-surge-idUSKBN298080>

Thailand bans food and magazines on domestic flights in bid to stop spread of coronavirus

Thailand has banned food and drink services and magazines on domestic flights. Airlines who do not follow the new regulations face a penalty from the regulator. It marks the second time the ban has come into force during the pandemic

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9104301/Thailand-bans-food-magazines-domestic-flights-bid-stop-spread-coronavirus.html>

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

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

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-vaccine-unblinding/pfizer-and-biontech-to-offer-covid-vaccine-to-volunteers-who-got-placebo-idUKL4N2JC0BW>

Covid: All London primary schools to stay closed

All primary schools in London will remain closed for the start of the new term, the government has confirmed. London mayor Sadiq Khan said the government had "finally seen sense and U-turned" on its plan to allow pupils in some areas to return on Monday. Leaders of nine London local authorities had written to Education Secretary Gavin Williamson urging him to rethink the decision. Mr

Williamson said the city-wide closures were "a last resort". The government said it had decided all primary schools in the capital would be required to provide remote learning after a further review of coronavirus transmission rates. Vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers will continue to attend school, the government said.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-55511169>

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

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

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

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

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

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/ireland/coronavirus-in-ireland-sluggish-vaccine-programme-will-hurt-high-street-sector-warns-j37n0n18j>

Doctors can't get a Covid vaccine in Wales and say the health service is in danger of collapse

Frontline doctors and other healthcare professionals are still struggling to access the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine in Wales, it is claimed. Dr David Bailey, chairman of the British Medical Association's (BMA) Welsh Council, said the Welsh NHS was "in danger of collapse" due to soaring staff absence levels. He said it was "unacceptable" that frontline clinicians were still being exposed to the virus day in, day out without proper protection. His comments come following the announcement that the Oxford University AstraZeneca vaccine has been approved for use by the MHRA and will be rolled out in Wales from next week.

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/health/doctors-cant-covid-vaccine-wales-19539435>

'Vaccine diplomacy' sees Egypt roll out Chinese coronavirus jab

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

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/dec/30/vaccine-diplomacy-sees-egypt-roll-out-chinese-coronavirus-jab>

Some Doctors in Britain Plan to Defy Instructions to Delay Vaccine Booster Shots

Some family doctors in Britain said on Thursday that they would defy the government's instructions to postpone patients' appointments for a second dose of coronavirus vaccine, a signal of unease in

the medical community over Britain's new plan to delay second shots as a way of giving more people the partial protection of a single dose. British doctors, who have been instructed to begin rescheduling second-dose appointments that had been set for next week, said they were loath to ask older, vulnerable patients to wait an extra two months for their booster shots of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. They said those patients had been counting on having the full protection of two doses, had already arranged for caregivers to help them get to their doctors' offices, and could ill afford to rely on a new and untested vaccination strategy.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/31/world/uk-britain-covid-coronavirus.html>

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

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

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

Healthcare Innovations

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

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

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/30/wuhan-nearly-490000-people-could-have-had-covid-study-finds>

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

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

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-india-vaccine-idUSKBN2962CN>

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

The Subject Expert Committee of the Central Drug Standard Control Organization on Friday has held that the data provided by Bharat Biotech for its coronavirus vaccine 'Covaxin' is not sufficient for granting it emergency use approval and has asked the company to provide more information

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/no-approval-for-covaxin-expert-panel-seeks-more-data-from-bharat-biotech/articleshow/80063237.cms>

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

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

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

Covid vaccine advice to people with severe allergies changes after Oxford jab approval

Coronavirus vaccine advice to people with severe allergies has changed after today's approval of the

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

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/covid-vaccine-advice-people-severe-23239156>