

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

22nd Apr 2022

Lockdown Exit

UK patient had COVID-19 for 505 days straight, study shows

A U.K. patient with a severely weakened immune system had COVID-19 for almost a year and a half, scientists reported, underscoring the importance of protecting vulnerable people from the coronavirus. There's no way to know for sure whether it was the longest-lasting COVID-19 infection because not everyone gets tested, especially on a regular basis like this case. But at 505 days, "it certainly seems to be the longest reported infection," said Dr. Luke Blagdon Snell, an infectious disease expert at the Guy's & St. Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust. Snell's team plans to present several "persistent" COVID-19 cases at an infectious diseases meeting in Portugal this weekend. Their study investigated which mutations arise — and whether variants evolve — in people with super long infections.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-science-health-infectious-diseases-1987841b2ed3f2b35d2e9153a6b9375c>

How to Avoid Getting Covid in a Mostly Mask-Free World

This week's lifting of mask requirements on airplanes and, in many parts of the country, on public transportation is a major turning point in the U.S. pandemic response. From now on, it seems, avoiding or minimizing Covid-19 infection will be a personal endeavor, not a societal one. This is for some people a welcome shift toward normalcy and for others a cause for anxiety and confusion. Many occupy an awkward middle space between not wanting to throw in the towel and also wanting to break free of some restrictions. About 42% of adults in the U.S. have gone back to some but not all of their pre-pandemic activities, according to a Kaiser Family Foundation poll.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2022-04-21/how-to-avoid-getting-covid-in-a-mostly-mask-free-world>

Hong Kong reopens venues, extends dining hours as COVID cases fall

Hong Kong reopened gyms, beauty parlours, theme parks, and cinemas for the first time in more than four months on Thursday, as authorities relax some of the world's most stringent COVID restrictions that have weighed on residents and businesses.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/hong-kong-reopens-venues-extends-dining-hours-covid-cases-fall-2022-04-21/>

Shanghai people 'not free to fly' out of homes as COVID cases tick back up

Shanghai authorities said on Thursday tough restrictions would remain in place for now even in districts which managed to cut COVID-19 transmission to zero, prolonging the agony for many residents who have been stuck at home for most of this month. That sober assessment, prompted by an unexpected rise in the number of cases outside quarantined areas, came after health officials earlier in the week had fuelled hopes of some return to normal by saying that trends in recent days showed Shanghai had "effectively curbed transmissions". At a regular press conference, an official from the Chongming district, an outlying island area, said most curbs would be kept in place, although it has reported zero cases outside quarantined areas and 90% of its 640,000-or-so residents were now in theory allowed to leave their homes.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-people-not-free-fly-out-homes-covid-cases-tick-back-up-2022-04-21/>

COVID-19: Hotel quarantine scheme cost taxpayers almost £400m despite being estimated to break even - government's own watchdog finds

The government's coronavirus hotel quarantine system, which was originally expected to break even, cost the taxpayers almost £400m - its own spending watchdog has found. A report by the

National Audit Office (NAO) found that despite the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) previously estimating that the cost of running the hotel quarantine service would be met by the price people were charged to stay in the rooms, the taxpayer has subsidised half of the scheme's total £786m cost. The NAO report adds that the overall cost of the scheme to the taxpayer is likely to be even higher as DHSC cannot ensure that everyone who stayed in a quarantine hotel has paid their bill - with the government owed £74m from outstanding hotel costs and COVID test purchases as of 1 March 2022.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-hotel-quarantine-scheme-cost-taxpayers-almost-400m-despite-being-estimated-to-break-even-governments-own-watchdog-finds-12594517>

Hong Kong reopens venues, extends dining hours as COVID cases fall

Hong Kong reopened gyms, beauty parlours, theme parks and cinemas on Thursday for the first time in more than four months, as authorities relaxed some of the world's toughest COVID-19 curbs, which have weighed on people and businesses. Some in the global financial hub flocked to salons and massage parlours, while others visited temples and churches which had also been shut. Many schools have also resumed in-person learning after months of online instruction.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/hong-kong-reopens-venues-extends-dining-hours-covid-cases-fall-2022-04-21/>

Hong Kong Disney opens as COVID eases; Shanghai deaths rise

Hong Kong relaxed pandemic restrictions on Thursday, with Disneyland and museums reopening and nighttime restaurant dining resuming as the city's worst COVID-19 outbreak appears to be fading. Enthusiastic visitors ran into Disneyland the moment the gates opened after a three-month closure. Popular theme parks were ordered to close in January as Hong Kong's fifth wave of the coronavirus took hold. Nearly 1.2 million people in the city of 7.4 million were infected in less than four months, and nearly 9,000 have died.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-travel-health-business-shanghai-0597fb955b1952f7453d18650a82df13>

Cambodia cuts quarantine for unvaccinated visitors to 7 days

Cambodia on Thursday reduced the required quarantine period from two weeks to one for arriving travelers who are not fully vaccinated against the coronavirus, acting after recording consistently low numbers of new infections in recent days. The Health Ministry also said that travelers arriving by air who have not been fully vaccinated must take a rapid antigen test on the last day of their quarantine. Arrivals by land -- mostly Cambodian workers in neighboring countries -- are required to take rapid antigen tests on arrival as well as on the last day of quarantine. Cambodia had already opened its borders to fully vaccinated travelers on Nov. 15 in an effort to revitalize its tourism-reliant economy.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-travel-lifestyle-pandemics-c5f69236782146955e0bddce7f2f78c4>

California set to keep workplace pandemic rules through 2022

California workplace regulators are poised to extend mandatory pay for workers affected by the coronavirus through the end of 2022, more than two months after state lawmakers restored similar benefits through September. The decision expected Thursday again pits management against labor as the seven-member Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board renews revised workplace safety rules that would otherwise expire in early May.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-business-health-california-pandemics-dd46ec5a5ccaa2781f869b4daf614e87>

Exit Strategies

Aspen In Talks With African Leaders on Low Covid Vaccine Orders

Article reports that Aspen Pharmacare Holdings Ltd. is in talks with African leaders about how to raise demand for Covid-19 vaccines after the continent's biggest drugmaker warned a lack of orders may force it to stop making the shots. Discussions are "underway and I assure you it's been

elevated to the highest level on the continent,” John Nkengasong, director of Africa CDC, said at a briefing on Thursday. “I’m sure more details will be provided in coming days, once we have more details from Africa’s political leadership.” Nkengasong last week appealed to African countries to place orders with local manufacturers including Durban, South Africa-based Aspen, which makes doses on behalf of Johnson & Johnson and in March said it agreed to make the shots under its own brand.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-21/aspen-in-talks-with-african-leaders-on-low-covid-vaccine-orders>

Coronavirus Northern Ireland: Health bosses take action due to poor uptake of vaccine in young kids

Only 1.39% of children aged five to 11 in Northern Ireland have been vaccinated against Covid-19, health bosses have said. The Public Health Agency (PHA) has created a vaccination toolkit to support uptake as it said safety concerns may be a driving factor for the low uptake in youngsters here. The vaccine has been available to children deemed to be at risk from the virus and those who live with someone who is immunocompromised since December but was opened up to all five to 11 year olds in February.

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/health/coronavirus/coronavirus-northern-ireland-health-bosses-take-action-due-to-poor-uptake-of-vaccine-in-young-kids-41571002.html>

CDC advisers mull what's next for Covid-19 boosters

Vaccine advisers to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention continue to mull over what the future of Covid-19 booster shots might look like -- and they acknowledge that entirely different vaccine formulations could be needed. At their meeting Wednesday, the members of the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices discussed their next steps around recommending additional booster doses of Covid-19 vaccines for the general public. Currently, additional booster doses are recommended only for certain people with weakened immune systems and adults 50 and older.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/20/health/cdc-acip-meeting-covid-booster-shots/index.html>

After rejecting COVID rule, Arizona could lose oversight of workplace safety

The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration on Wednesday moved to revoke Arizona's ability to police workplace safety within the state after it refused to adopt a federal rule requiring COVID-19 protections for healthcare workers. OSHA in a proposal published in the Federal Register said Arizona's failure to enforce the emergency COVID-19 rule last year was the latest in a decade-long series of instances where the state shirked its duty to adopt safety standards at least as strict as comparable federal requirements.

<https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/after-rejecting-covid-rule-arizona-could-lose-oversight-workplace-safety-2022-04-20/>

Incoming S.Korean leader's team to review lifting of COVID curbs

South Korean president-elect Yoon Suk-yeol is at odds with a decision by the outgoing government to lift nearly all coronavirus curbs this week, vowing to reconsider a plan to exempt all patients from quarantine requirements from May. In a major step this week towards a return to normal life, the government of President Moon Jae-in lifted almost all its social distancing curbs, such as midnight curfew for restaurants and a ban on gatherings of more than 10 people.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/incoming-skorean-leaders-team-review-lifting-covid-curbs-2022-04-21/>

U.S. extends COVID vaccine requirements for non-citizens at land borders

The Biden administration said Thursday it is extending a requirement that non-U.S. citizens crossing land or ferry terminals at the U.S.-Mexico and U.S.-Canada borders must be vaccinated against COVID-19. The requirements were first adopted in November as part of reopening the United States

to land crossings by foreign tourists after the borders had been closed to most foreign visitors since March 2020.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/us-extends-covid-vaccine-requirements-non-citizens-land-borders-2022-04-21/>

Boston urges masks as battle brews over transit rule

Boston urged people to start wearing masks Thursday and the Biden administration weighed its next legal step in what is shaping up to be a high-stakes court fight over the abrupt end of the national mask mandate on airplanes and mass transit. The Boston Public Health Commission noted a rise in hospitalizations, as well as a 65% increase in cases and an even larger spike in COVID-19 levels in local wastewater samples. It also stressed that the guidance was merely a recommendation, not an order. The country is wrestling with how to deal with the next phase of the pandemic and find the right balance in enacting health measures at a time when many Americans are ready to move on after two exhausting years.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-business-health-pandemics-public-fececc439c7ae04949a2542464702c29>

US extends COVID vaccine requirement at land borders

The administration of US President Joe Biden has extended a COVID-19 vaccination requirement for non-US citizens crossing land or ferry terminals at the United States's borders with Mexico and Canada. In a statement on Thursday, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said the extension followed a consultation with federal health agencies, including the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/21/us-extends-covid-vaccine-requirement-at-land-borders>

Pfizer faces criticism for arguing that intellectual property for its Covid-19 pill is a human right

umerous advocacy groups and institutional shareholders are chiding Pfizer for arguing that its intellectual property is a human right and would be violated if the Dominican Republican government issues a compulsory license for its Covid-19 pill. Advocates say the company invoked human rights in a recent hearing in which it attempted to convince the Dominican government not to issue such a licence for its pill, Paxlovid.

<https://www.statnews.com/pharmalot/2022/04/20/patent-pfizer-covid19-patent-paxlovid-dominican-republic/>

Partisan Exits

UK lawmakers approve probe into PM Boris Johnson's 'Partygate'

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson suffered a blow to his authority when lawmakers ordered a parliamentary investigation into his past denials that he broke coronavirus restrictions by attending illegal gatherings during the pandemic. Johnson on Thursday faced stinging criticism from his own Conservative party and an influential former ally called on him to quit over what has become known as the "Partygate" scandal, which has caused widespread public anger. The investigation will look into whether Johnson knowingly misled the Parliament of the United Kingdom - ordinarily a resigning offence if proven. But a bullish Johnson - on a two-day trip to India - insisted he was not going anywhere. In India, Johnson vowed he would not quit and intended to fight the next general election - still likely at least two years away. "I understand people's feelings," he told Sky News. But he said of stepping aside: "I don't think that is the right thing to do. What I am determined to do is make sure we continue with our agenda."

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/21/uk-lawmakers-approve-probe-into-pm-boris-johnsons-partygate>

UK PM Johnson says lawmakers' probe into COVID breaches should come later

British police should be allowed to complete their investigation into potential COVID lockdown breaches in government offices before parliament launches its own investigation, Prime Minister

Boris Johnson said on Thursday. "I'm very keen for every possible form of scrutiny and the House of Commons can do, I think, whatever it wants to do, but all I would say is I don't think that that should happen until the investigation is completed," he told reporters during a visit to India.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-pm-johnson-says-lawmakers-probe-into-covid-breaches-should-come-later-2022-04-21/>

U.S. charges 21 people with COVID-related fraud

U.S. law enforcement officials have charged 21 people across the country with healthcare schemes amid the pandemic as part of the administration's larger effort to thwart people from leveraging COVID-19 for fraud, the Department of Justice said on Wednesday. The latest charges include cases involving filing false Medicare and other billing claims, kickbacks and money laundering, the department said, adding the alleged actions led to more than \$149 million in COVID-19-related false billings to federal programs and theft from federally-funded pandemic assistance programs.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-charges-21-people-with-covid-related-fraud-2022-04-20/>

UK's Johnson may face contempt probe over lockdown parties

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson suffered a blow to his authority on Thursday when lawmakers triggered an investigation into whether he had misled parliament and an influential former ally called on him to quit. Johnson has been fighting for political survival for months after he told parliament that his Downing Street office had followed all lockdown rules during the COVID pandemic, only for an internal report to find it had held alcohol-fuelled parties at that time. Police have since fined Johnson. He denies deliberately misleading parliament, which is a resigning matter, and says he did not realise he was breaking the rules. He has apologised for his conduct.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-pm-johnson-seeks-defuse-showdown-over-whether-he-misled-parliament-2022-04-21/>

Continued Lockdown

A prolonged China slowdown raises risks for global economy, IMF chief says

A prolonged slowdown in China would have substantial global spillovers, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said on Thursday, but added that Beijing has room to adjust policy to provide support. The International Monetary Fund on Tuesday cut its growth forecast for China this year to 4.4%, well below Beijing's target of around 5.5%, on the risks of widespread COVID-19 lockdowns and supply chain disruptions. In a video speech to the annual Boao Forum for Asia, Georgieva said China's actions to counter its economic slowdown are vital for the global recovery.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/imf-chief-warns-risks-prolonged-china-slowdown-2022-04-21/>

Shanghai to keep COVID curbs as infections outside quarantine rise again

Shanghai urges cooperation with COVID tests amid rising scepticism By ReutersInvesting.com
Shanghai turns residences into COVID isolation facilities, sparking protest By ReutersInvesting.com
UKUPDATE 2-Shanghai hopes COVID tide turning, with fewer cases outside quarantine areas
Yahoo Finance
Shanghai reports rise in Covid-19 deaths for April 20
Daily Maverick
View Full coverage on Google News

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-keep-covid-curbs-infections-outside-quarantine-rise-again-2022-04-21/>

Scientific Viewpoint

Antibody response to Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine over 6 months

The binding responses and temporal dynamics of antibodies elicited against the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) due to vaccination must be fully understood to design future vaccination strategies. A new study published in PLoS ONE characterizes the antibody response to BNT162b2, the Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccine. This study analyzes the temporal dynamics of immunoglobulin G (IgG) and IgM antibody response to five

different SARS-CoV-2 epitopes over a period of six months after vaccination.

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20220420/Antibody-response-to-Pfizer-BioNTech-COVID-19-vaccine-over-6-months.aspx>

Codiak Presents New Preclinical Data Supporting Development of a Broadly Protective Pan Beta-Coronavirus Vaccine

Codiak BioSciences, a clinical-stage biopharmaceutical company focused on pioneering the development of exosome-based candidates as a new class of medicines, today announced new preclinical data from its pan beta-coronavirus vaccine program, which aims to protect against all SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern and potential future strains belonging to the beta-coronavirus family. The data, which are being presented today at the World Vaccine Congress 2022 in Washington, D.C., demonstrate the potential for a novel engineered exosome-based vaccine candidate derived from Codiak's exoVACC™ platform to induce cross-neutralizing antibody protection against multiple strains of coronaviruses and an antigen-specific and comprehensive immune response against structurally conserved regions of multiple coronavirus variants.

<https://www.biospace.com/article/releases/codiak-presents-new-preclinical-data-supporting-development-of-a-broadly-protective-pan-beta-coronavirus-vaccine/>

Novavax publishes positive initial data for first combined Covid and flu vaccine

Novavax has published the first clinical data for a combined Covid-19 and flu vaccine, with promising initial findings that a two-in-one shot could be safe and effective. The trial, conducted in Australia, studied the combined shot in almost 650 people aged 50 to 70. An initial analysis found that their immune responses were similar to that for Novavax's standalone Covid-19 vaccine and its flu vaccine candidate, which is waiting for regulatory approval. The safety profile was also similar to the individual vaccines, with no serious adverse events.

<https://www.ft.com/content/bf129ee9-e5f6-435d-9b0c-7c0a1c3f3e47>

Third Covid-19 vaccine dose offers 'prolonged immune response' - UK-wide study

A UK-wide study has found a prolonged immune response from third doses of Covid-19 vaccines. The Cov-Boost study, led by the University Hospital Southampton (UHS), compared immune responses to seven vaccines used as a booster 28 days after participants had received two initial doses of either the AstraZeneca or Pfizer vaccines. The latest findings, published online in the Journal of Infection, show "strong immune responses" are still seen 84 days after third jabs, with five of the Covid-19 vaccines currently approved for use in the UK (AstraZeneca, Pfizer, Moderna, Janssen and Novavax vaccines). Of these vaccines, only three – Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca – have been used in the UK booster programme.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/pfizer-astrazeneca-university-hospital-southampton-moderna-university-of-southampton-b2062370.html>

Nearly half of those recovering from coronavirus infection endure 'long Covid' symptoms, study finds

An analysis of data from 50 studies looking at 1.6 million people suggests that as much as 43 per cent of those infected with the coronavirus experienced post-Covid conditions, pointing to the need for better diagnosis and care for "long Covid" patients. Post-Covid conditions are clinically defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as mid- and long-term symptoms – also known as long Covid – occurring in individuals after infection with the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The research, published this week in the Journal of Infectious Disease, assessed 23 symptoms reported across 36 of the studies and found that shortness of breath, sleep problems, and joint pain was widely reported by those who had recovered from the novel coronavirus infection.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/coronavirus-infection-recovery-long-covid-b2062154.html>

Air pollution increases risk of Covid infection among young adults, study suggests

Air pollution heightens the risk of Covid-19 infection among young adults, a new study suggests. Previous studies have shown that areas of poor air quality have more cases of Covid-19, pointing to a potential link between the virus and rates of infection. The researchers merged a population-based project which has followed more than 4,000 participants in Stockholm from birth with Sweden's national communicable disease registry, SmiNet. They identified 425 people who had tested positive for Sars-CoV-2 between May 2020 and the end of March 2021. The average age of the participants was 26, and 54 per cent were women.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/covid-air-pollution-link-latest-b2061494.html>

Covid-19: Has the spread of omicron BA.2 made antibody treatments redundant?

Drug regulators are reviewing authorisations for monoclonal antibody treatments just months after they were issued. Elisabeth Mahase asks what the future holds for this class of biologicals. The US Food and Drug Administration has removed its authorisation for anti-SARS-CoV-2 monoclonal antibody treatment sotrovimab because of concerns that it is ineffective against the omicron subvariant BA.2, which is now dominant in the US. The UK's Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) authorised sotrovimab for high risk over 12s with mild to moderate covid-19 in December 2021 after reporting that a single dose, given as an intravenous infusion over 30 minutes, reduced the risk of hospital admission and death by 79% in high risk adults with symptomatic covid-19. The regulator has told The BMJ that it is also now reviewing the treatment to see if the "benefit-risk balance remains favourable." Laura Squire, the MHRA's chief officer for healthcare access and quality, said, "We are in contact with the FDA and are looking closely at the data supporting their decision."

<https://www.bmj.com/content/377/bmj.o1009>

COVID-19: Moderna's bivalent vaccine more effective against variants

The U.S. pharmaceutical company Moderna announced Tuesday that its updated mRNA COVID-19 booster had produced a better immune response in clinical trials against several SARS-CoV-2 variants, including Omicron and Delta. The booster is a type of vaccine scientists call "bivalent," which works by stimulating an immune response against two different antigens. Moderna designed the new formula to target both the Beta variant, which surfaced in South Africa in July 2020, and the original variant of SARS-CoV-2. The boosters currently in use—from Moderna, Pfizer, and others—were only based on the original variant.

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/modernas-new-covid-19-booster-protects-better-against-omicron-other-variants>

Covid-19 still isn't like the flu

When Delta Air Lines referred to Covid-19 as an "ordinary seasonal virus" after a federal judge struck down the Biden administration's mask mandate for public transportation, they were partly right: there is some evidence that it is seasonal. But it is far from ordinary, and it's still not the same as the flu. The lifting of the transportation mask mandate marks another turning point in the Covid-19 pandemic in the United States, and there are many ways to describe the situation at this inflection point.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/20/health/covid-not-like-flu-yet/index.html>

COVID-19 vaccines do not heighten heart inflammation risk in most individuals

Recent studies have suggested that COVID-19 vaccines may increase the risk of heart inflammation, which can be potentially fatal. A meta-analysis synthesizing data from 22 previous studies suggests that the risk of heart inflammation after a COVID-19 vaccine was similar to that following vaccination against other diseases. Males and individuals under the age of 30 were at a higher risk of heart inflammation, especially after the second dose. These results suggest that the risk of heart inflammation after having a COVID-19 vaccine is generally low, supporting previous data about their

safety.

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/covid-19-vaccines-do-not-heighten-heart-inflammation-risk-in-most-individuals>

Healthcare worker tests positive for COVID-19 twice in 20 days in world first since pandemic began, study suggests

A healthcare worker was infected with COVID-19 twice in just 20 days - believed to be the shortest time between two infections documented since the pandemic began. The Spanish woman, 31, became infected with the Delta variant followed by the Omicron variant of the virus in under three weeks, according to a study. Researchers say the case shows that even vaccinated people who have had COVID-19 "cannot assume they are protected against reinfection". Dr Gemma Recio, of the Institut Catala de la Salut in Spain, one of the study's authors, said it highlights the potential of the Omicron variant to evade previous immunity.

<https://news.sky.com/story/healthcare-worker-tests-positive-for-covid-19-twice-in-20-days-in-world-first-since-pandemic-began-study-suggests-12594363>

Moderna to file for EUA of COVID-19 shot for very young kids by April end

Moderna plans to submit an application to the U.S. health regulator for emergency use authorization (EUA) of its COVID-19 vaccine among kids between the ages of six months to five years by end of the month, a company spokesperson said on Wednesday. The Omicron variant was predominant during Moderna's pediatric trial, and the drugmaker said two doses were around 38% effective in preventing infections in 2 to 5-year-olds and 44% effective for children aged 6 months to under 2 years.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/moderna-plans-file-eua-covid-19-shot-very-young-kids-by-april-end-2022-04-20/>

Taiwan approves second COVID booster dose, infections yet to peak

Taiwan's government has approved a second COVID-19 booster vaccine dose for those 65 and older, and third boosters for the immunocompromised, as it looks to step up its fight against a spike in domestic infections that has yet to peak. While Taiwan is dealing with a rise in local cases, the numbers overall remain small - 15,544 since Jan. 1 - and just four people have died, with more than 99% of those infected reporting either minor or no symptoms. Taiwan's Centres for Disease Control said late Wednesday it had approved second booster shots for the elderly, as well as residents of long-term care facilities.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taiwan-approves-second-covid-booster-shot-elderly-2022-04-21/>

CureVac, GSK's experimental COVID variant vaccine effective in mice -study

CureVac and GSK's second-generation vaccine candidate targeting two recent COVID-19 variants has been shown to be highly effective in preclinical studies on mice, CureVac said, as it seeks to catch up with rivals' development work. A study in mice showed that the bivalent vaccine candidate, designed to address the Beta and Delta variants of the coronavirus, elicited neutralizing antibody levels that were comparable to the monovalent vaccine candidates targeting only one of the variants.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/curevac-gsk-new-covid-variant-vaccine-effective-animal-studies-2022-04-21/>

COVID-19 tracker: UK study finds strong responses 84 days after booster shot

A U.K.-wide study found prolonged "strong immune responses" 84 days after participants received a booster COVID-19 shot. The study, led by the University Hospital Southampton (UHS) and published in the Journal of Infection, tested immune responses after seven different vaccines used as a boosters 28 days after receiving two doses of AstraZeneca or Pfizer vaccines. While different initial vaccines yielded different results from the booster, "the rate that immune cell responses declined

after third doses was similar between all the vaccine combinations and doses,” according to a UHS spokeswoman quoted in the Evening Standard. The study also found that a half dose of Pfizer’s vaccine prompts similar responses to a full dose at three months, which could “help in planning global vaccine supply and delivery,” according to Saul Faust, a professor of pediatric immunology and infectious diseases at the University of Southampton and director of the NIHR Southampton Clinical Research Facility.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/covid-19-tracker-pfizer-targets-variant-specific-vaccines-fall>

Coronavirus Resurgence

COVID cases down in the Americas even as North America faces increase -PAHO

COVID-19 cases and deaths are declining in the Americas, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) said on Wednesday, with infections last week having dropped 2.3% and deaths falling 15.2% from the prior week. The broad trend comes even as cases have scaled up in North America with an 11.2% increase last week, the organization said, noting that in Canada hospitalizations rose by more than 20% as the proportion of Omicron BA.2 cases grew. As borders have re-opened and tourism has ramped up, cases have also surged in some Caribbean countries and territories, with Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Barbados and Saint Martin having recorded the largest relative increases.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/covid-cases-down-americas-even-north-america-faces-increase-paho-2022-04-20/>

Italy reports 99848 coronavirus cases on Wednesday, 205 deaths

Italy reported 99,848 COVID-19 related cases on Wednesday, against 27,214 the day before, the health ministry said, while the daily number of deaths rose to 205 from 127. Italy has registered 162,098 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. The country has reported 15.86 million cases to date. Patients in hospital with COVID-19 - not including those in intensive care - stood at 10,207 on Wednesday, down from 10,214 a day earlier. There were 44 new admissions to intensive care units, up from 38 on Tuesday. The total number of intensive care patients stood at 413, decreasing from a previous 422.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/italy-reports-99848-coronavirus-cases-wednesday-205-deaths-2022-04-20/>

WHO says global COVID cases, deaths declined again last week

The World Health Organization says that the number of reported new COVID-19 cases worldwide decreased by nearly a quarter last week, continuing a decline since the end of March. The Geneva-based U.N. health agency said in a weekly report that nearly 5.59 million cases were reported between April 11 and 17, 24% fewer than in the previous week. The number of newly reported deaths dropped 21% to 18,215. WHO said new cases declined in every region, though only by 2% in the Americas. The report was dated late Wednesday and sent to journalists on Thursday. The agency said that “these trends should be interpreted with caution as several countries are progressively changing their COVID-19 testing strategies, resulting in lower overall numbers of tests performed and consequently lower numbers of cases detected.”

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-business-health-united-nations-world-organization-e486627a345b8173adcfeaf06a604fe4>

Surprisingly low Shanghai COVID death count spurs questions

Lu Muying died on April 1 in a government quarantine facility in Shanghai, with her family on the phone as doctors tried to resuscitate her. She had tested positive for COVID-19 in late March and was moved there in line with government policy that all coronavirus cases be centrally isolated. But the 99-year-old, who was just two weeks shy of her 100th birthday, was not counted as a COVID-19 death in Shanghai’s official tally. In fact, the city of more than 25 million has only reported 25 coronavirus deaths despite an outbreak that has spanned nearly two months and infected hundreds

of thousands of people in the world's third-largest city. Lu's death underscores how the true extent of the virus toll in Shanghai has been obscured by Chinese authorities. Doctors told Lu's relatives she died because COVID-19 exacerbated her underlying heart disease and high blood pressure, yet she still was not counted.

<https://apnews.com/article/covid-science-business-health-shanghai-76bb35f8313f60258baa83460efdc14c>