

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

26th Jan 2022

Lockdown Exit

Student nurses urged to have Covid-19 jab or risk ability to join register

Nursing students who have not been double vaccinated against Covid-19 by April will not be able to undertake clinical placements, risking their ability to complete their studies and join the register. New guidance published by Health Education England (HEE) on 21 January offers answers to frequently asked questions around what the upcoming change in vaccination rules will mean for the nursing student population. All patient-facing health and care workers in England, unless medically exempt, will be required to have two doses of the Covid-19 vaccine by April, or they risk being redeployed or losing their jobs altogether. Unvaccinated staff and students will need to have had their first dose by 3 February in order to meet the requirements. In recent weeks, nursing leaders have called for the government's new mandate to be delayed amid concerns over the impact it will have on the workforce.

<https://www.nursingtimes.net/news/education/student-nurses-urged-to-have-covid-19-jab-or-risk-ability-to-join-register-24-01-2022/>

COVID-19: As UK restrictions lift, what challenges do we face before the 'end' of the pandemic - and when could that be?

The World Health Organisation has criticised political leaders for comparing coronavirus to flu again and stressed it is still "full of very nasty surprises" despite restrictions lifting in the UK. Announcing the scrapping of Plan B measures in England last week, Health Secretary Sajid Javid said that with "Omicron in retreat" we "must learn to live with COVID" as it could be "with us forever". But Dr David Nabarro, WHO special envoy on COVID-19, warned that "governments everywhere should not suggest the data has suddenly changed, or the virus got incredibly weak".

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-as-uk-restrictions-lift-what-challenges-do-we-face-before-the-end-of-the-pandemic-and-when-could-that-be-12524215>

Israel mulls offering 4th COVID vaccine dose to all adults

An Israeli government advisory panel has recommended offering a fourth COVID-19 vaccine dose to all adults, on condition that at least five months have passed since they received the third or recovered from the illness, the Health Ministry said on Tuesday. Implementation of the measure, which would significantly expand eligibility now limited to the over-60s and other high-risk groups, is subject to approval by the ministry's director-general. It was not immediately clear when that might happen.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/israel-mulls-offering-4th-covid-vaccine-dose-all-adults-2022-01-25/>

Pfizer and BioNTech launch trial of Omicron-targeted COVID vaccine

Pfizer Inc and BioNTech SE said they started a clinical trial to test a new version of their vaccine specifically designed to target the COVID-19 Omicron variant, which has eluded some of the protection provided by the original two-dose vaccine regimen. Banking on volunteers in the United States, the companies plan to test the immune response generated by the Omicron-based vaccine both as a three-shot regimen in unvaccinated people and as a booster shot for people who already received two doses of their original vaccine. They are also testing a fourth dose of the current vaccine against a fourth dose of the Omicron-based vaccine in people who received a third dose of

the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine three to six months earlier.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/pfizer-biontech-launch-trial-omicron-targeted-covid-vaccine-2022-01-25/>

Omicron spreads in New Zealand, spoiling PM's wedding plans

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern is postponing her wedding after announcing new COVID-19 restrictions Sunday following the discovery of nine cases of the omicron variant in a single family that flew to Auckland to attend a wedding. The so-called “red setting” of the country’s pandemic response includes heightened measures such as required mask wearing and limits on gatherings. The restrictions will go into effect on Monday. Ardern stressed that “red is not lockdown,” noting that businesses can remain open and people can still visit family and friends and move freely around the country. “Our plan for managing omicron cases in the early stage remains the same as delta, where we will rapidly test, contact trace and isolate cases and contacts in order to slow the spread,” Ardern told reporters.

<https://apnews.com/article/new-zealand-covid-restrictions-jacinda-ardern-wedding-plans-6f17d8f4cf4d54053b83f08616021f43>

Exit Strategies

Vaccines will always be our best weapon against Covid - here’s how to deploy them

Since the pandemic began almost two years ago, the monster that is Covid-19 has visited every corner of Earth, killing more than 5.5 million people. But we have fought back with astounding speed and vigour, and the situation today is very different from that in early 2020. Ten billion vaccine doses will have been administered worldwide by early February. The Covax scheme has delivered 1bn vaccines to lower-income countries. As a result, global daily deaths from the virus are at their lowest point in more than a year. So, is the monster slain? No. Covid-19 will not just disappear. Only one human infectious disease has been eradicated from the planet – smallpox – and that took nearly 200 years. Polio is near to extinction, but it has taken a 70-year campaign.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/jan/25/vaccines-best-weapon-covid-boosters>

‘Putting lives at risk’: Bulgaria referred to rights body over Covid vaccine rollout

Bulgaria’s government has been accused of negligence for failing to prioritise over-65s and people with pre-existing health conditions in its Covid vaccine rollout, in a case that exposes the low uptake of jabs in one of the EU’s poorest member states. The Open Society Foundations (OSF) charitable group said it was filing a formal complaint to the human-rights-focused Council of Europe, alleging that Bulgaria’s government had put lives at risk, possibly leading to thousands of avoidable deaths.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/25/putting-lives-at-risk-bulgaria-referred-to-rights-body-over-covid-vaccine-rollout>

Croatia's conservative party initiates COVID certificate referendum

Croatia's conservative Most party handed 82 boxes of papers in to parliament on Monday carrying the signatures of 410,533 people calling on the government to hold a referendum on whether to abolish COVID-19 certificates. The government must check the signatures, and if they are found to be valid, the date for a referendum can be set. Croatia has one of the European Union's lowest vaccination rates, with around 55% of its population inoculated against COVID-19, ahead of only Bulgaria, Romania and Latvia.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/croatias-conservative-party-initiates-covid-certificate-referendum-2022-01-24/>

Mandatory COVID shots could deepen German nurse shortage, say care companies

As Germany gears up to make COVID-19 vaccination compulsory in the healthcare sector, the industry fears that resistance among some workers will exacerbate staffing shortages and leave many families reliant on carers in the lurch. Around 90% of medical staff in Germany are vaccinated,

compared to about 70% in the general population, but that still leaves hundreds of thousands not vaccinated. Institutions and families that are heavily reliant on workers from eastern Europe where vaccination rates are lower have particular reason to be worried, said Daniel Schloer, the owner of the SunaCare GmbH agency that matches German families with Polish carers looking for work abroad.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/mandatory-covid-shots-could-deepen-german-nurse-shortage-say-care-companies-2022-01-25/>

Norway scraps coronavirus quarantines

Norway will end its system of mandatory COVID-19 quarantines for non-vaccinated travellers and close contacts of infected persons, replacing it instead with a daily test regime, the government announced on Monday. Under the current rules, anyone arriving in Norway from an area with a quarantine obligation and who cannot show proof of vaccination, or having undergone COVID-19, needs to quarantine for at least three days. Close contacts of infected people are required to quarantine for 10 days.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/norway-scraps-coronavirus-quarantines-2022-01-24/>

Dutch bars and restaurants can reopen after lockdown - PM Rutte

Bars, restaurants and theatres in the Netherlands can reopen on Jan. 26, Prime Minister Mark Rutte said on Tuesday, further relaxing the country's COVID-19 restrictions despite record infection levels. Health Minister Ernst Kuipers said experts felt the reopening was possible in part because hospitalisations from the country's Omicron wave have been lower than initially feared. "We really are taking a risk today, and we have to be clear about that," Rutte said, announcing the decision at a nationally televised news conference.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/netherlands-expected-ease-covid-curbs-despite-record-infections-2022-01-25/>

German firms fear supply chain pain from China's battle with Omicron

German companies doing business in China are worried the Omicron coronavirus variant will trigger more strict lockdown measures from Beijing that could exacerbate supply chain problems, the DIHK Chamber of Commerce said on Tuesday. "The Chinese strategy with targeted lockdowns has been very efficient so far," Jens Hildebrandt, DIHK's executive board member in China, told Reuters in an interview. But the more contagious Omicron variant could challenge the zero-COVID approach by Chinese authorities, especially as more Chinese citizens will travel across the country due to the upcoming holiday season, Hildebrandt said.

<https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/german-firms-fear-supply-chain-pain-chinas-battle-with-omicron-2022-01-25/>

South African corruption probe flags COVID contracts worth \$137 million

South African investigators have flagged COVID-19 contracts worth around 2.1 billion rand (\$137.12 million) for possible corruption and fraud, a report into corruption linked to the pandemic showed on Tuesday. President Cyril Ramaphosa authorised the investigation into his government's coronavirus spending in 2020 following a spate of scandals that caused public outrage. Anger over corruption was one reason why the governing African National Congress last year recorded its worst-ever election result, with its share of the vote dropping below 50% in municipal polls

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/safrican-corruption-probe-flags-covid-contracts-worth-137-million-2022-01-25/>

IMF cuts growth forecasts for U.S., China and the world as Omicron spreads

The International Monetary Fund lowered its economic forecasts for the United States, China and the global economy on Tuesday, and said uncertainty about the pandemic, inflation, supply disruptions and U.S. monetary tightening posed further risks. "We project global growth this year at 4.4%, 0.5 percentage point lower than previously forecast, mainly because of downgrades for the United States and China," Gita Gopinath, the IMF's No. 2 official, read from her blog.

<https://www.reuters.com/markets/us/imf-cuts-growth-forecasts-us-china-world-omicron-spreads-2022-01-25/>

J&J expects up to \$3.5 bln in COVID vaccine sales this year

Johnson & Johnson on Tuesday forecast \$3 billion-\$3.5 billion in revenue for its COVID-19 vaccine this year, compared to \$2.39 billion it generated in 2021, even as the drugmaker faces manufacturing issues and uneven demand for the shot.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/jj-expects-up-35-bln-covid-vaccine-sales-this-year-2022-01-25/>

Hospitals Ask Congress for \$25 Billion Amid Omicron's Onslaught

Hospitals are asking Congress to give them another \$25 billion and hand out all previously allotted funds to shore up facilities ravaged by the omicron outbreak. The money would pay for training and extra security as hospitals cope with staff shortages, higher costs and lost revenue, the American Hospital Association said in a letter to congressional leaders. "We are now in need of additional immediate support from Congress and the administration in order to continue standing strong and to be able to provide timely access to life-saving health care to your constituents," AHA Executive Vice President Stacey Hughes wrote in a letter dated Jan. 20. "The current surge has impacted hospitals in ways not seen previously."

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-24/hospitals-ask-congress-for-25-billion-amid-omicron-s-onslaught>

Moderna Rout Continues as Haven Plays Replace Vaccine Names

Moderna Inc. and BioNTech SE, two major providers of the Covid-19 inoculations that rallied amid the pandemic, have each tumbled roughly 40% since the start of January, leaving them poised for the biggest monthly drops ever. Novavax Inc. fell as much as 22% on Monday alone and is down over 70% since early September. CureVac NV has tumbled, too. Even pharmaceutical stalwarts have sold off with Johnson & Johnson down 6.3% in a 10-day slide. The health-care giant is set to report earnings on Tuesday. Pfizer Inc., which along with its BioNTech-partnered vaccine makes its own Covid pill, has dropped roughly 13% this month. With Omicron at peak levels and infections starting to fade, it is "unclear what the near-term role for its anti-viral will be should the variant pose as more manageable," said Oppenheimer strategist Jared Holz.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-24/shot-maker-stocks-see-worst-month-ever-in-end-to-vaccine-trade>

Hong Kong Push for Covid Zero Creates a Labor Shortage

Domestic helpers — cooks, cleaners and nannies in one — are in high demand, but a system that favors employers has some fearing they'll be jobless if they seek higher wages.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2022-01-25/hong-kong-push-for-covid-zero-creates-a-labor-shortage>

Partisan Exits

Florida Gov Ron DeSantis Touts Covid Monoclonal Antibody Treatments FDA Stopped

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis said he would consider suing the federal government to allow use of two monoclonal antibody therapies for Covid-19, after the Food and Drug Administration halted their use and said they don't work against the omicron variant. White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said DeSantis's position was "crazy" when the government was still supplying the potentially life-saving treatment -- just not the specific brands found to be ineffective. The FDA said Monday that it was rescinding authorization for the Eli Lilly & Co. and Regeneron Pharmaceuticals Inc. monoclonal antibody treatments in the U.S. because they aren't effective against omicron, which has become overwhelmingly dominant in all regions of the country, including Florida.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-25/desantis-touts-covid-treatments-after-fda-says-they-don-t-work>

Eric Clapton called out after comparing Covid vaccines to 'mass hypnosis' scheme

Eric Clapton has sparked outrage online after claiming people who have had the Covid vaccine are victims of “mass formation hypnosis”, during a recent interview. The 76-year-old rocker previously claimed he suffered “disastrous” side effects allegedly due to the AstraZeneca vaccine, saying his hands and feet were “either frozen, numb or burning, and pretty much useless” and he feared he “would never play [the guitar] again.” He also released an anti-lockdown single, “Stand and Deliver”, with Van Morrison in 2020. Speaking to The Real Music Observer in an interview uploaded to their YouTube channel on 21 January, Clapton said he was feeling pretty good nine months after getting “sick with the thing [vaccine].”

<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/news/eric-clapton-covid-vaccine-hypnosis-b1999967.html>

Londoners fined £10,000 for birthday parties in Covid lockdown

Londoners who threw birthday parties during the pandemic in spite of Covid-19 lockdown restrictions have faced fines of more than £10,000. Prime Minister Boris Johnson faced fresh Partygate scrutiny on Tuesday after it emerged a surprise celebration had been held in Downing Street in June 2020 to mark his 56th birthday. At the time, groups of more than two people were banned from socialising indoors under government restrictions, while the PM himself had publicly called for birthday celebrations to be postponed until the pandemic was under control. Enfield resident Torino Reid was fined £14,000 when police broke up a gathering in the shed in his back garden, which had been organised to mark his niece’s birthday.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/birthday-party-boris-johnson-prosecution-covid-fines-lockdown-b978593.html>

Spain breaks up COVID passport forgery ring

Spanish police said on Tuesday they had detained seven suspected members of an international criminal gang that created and sold forged COVID-19 passports and negative tests. The Spanish arm of the ring, which advertised its services on “anti-vax” instant message groups, fraudulently added at least 1,600 people to the national vaccination register with the help of health workers, the investigation found.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/spain-breaks-up-covid-passport-forgery-ring-2022-01-25/>

Another blow to UK PM, British police probe lockdown parties

An internal inquiry into allegations of lockdown parties at Boris Johnson's Downing Street office could be published as soon as Wednesday, delivering findings that might determine the prime minister's future after police also launched an investigation. Johnson is fighting for his political life after allegations that he and staff partied at the heart of the British government in breach of rules they had themselves imposed to fight the coronavirus pandemic. Revelations of revelry including boozy parties in Downing Street, suitcases of supermarket alcohol, a broken children's swing, a wine fridge and jokes by staff about how to present such parties to reporters, have hammered Johnson's ratings.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/we-understand-concern-over-uk-pm-johnsons-lockdown-birthday-party-minister-says-2022-01-25/>

New York Mask Mandate Ruled Unconstitutional by State Judge

New York is appealing a ruling by a Long Island judge that its mask mandate for schools and other public places is an illegal end run around the state constitution. The mask-wearing rule was issued Dec. 10 by the state’s health commissioner at the urging of Governor Kathy Hochul, around the start of the omicron surge of the coronavirus pandemic. A group of parents sued to block the mandate, saying their school-age children shouldn’t be forced to wear masks. On Monday, Judge Thomas Rademaker ruled that Hochul and Health Commissioner Mary Bassett overstepped their authority, saying the governor should instead seek the passage of a law.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-25/new-york-mask-mandate-ruled-unconstitutional-by-state-judge>

Scientific Viewpoint

Pfizer Begins Study Testing Omicron Vaccine in People

Pfizer Inc. and BioNTech SE have started a trial evaluating an adapted version of their Covid-19 vaccine that targets the Omicron variant of the coronavirus. The drugmakers said Tuesday they began enrolling adults ages 18 to 55 in the U.S. and South Africa to examine the safety, tolerability and immune response generated by the vaccine if it is given either as a primary series or as a booster dose. One subject has already received the shot, Pfizer said. Initial study results are expected in the first half of the year, Pfizer said. The drugmaker could ask U.S. regulators for authorization and begin distribution in March, should the Omicron-targeted shot prove to work safely, Chief Executive Albert Bourla has said. Should the vaccine be needed, Pfizer and BioNTech would still be able to manufacture 4 billion doses of the shot this year, the companies said.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/pfizer-begins-study-testing-omicron-vaccine-in-people-11643111101>

Novavax Covid-19 vaccine to be rolled out in Australia from next month

Australia's health minister has announced that Novavax's Covid-19 vaccine will be rolled out across the country from February 21. The news comes just days after the Australian drugs regulator Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) provisionally approved the jab,

<https://www.pharmaceutical-technology.com/news/novavax-covid-19-vaccine-rolled-out-australia/>

Pfizer and BioNTech maintain production estimates of 4 billion COVID-19 vaccine doses in 2022

Pfizer and BioNTech expect to produce four billion doses of their COVID-19 vaccine in 2022: regardless of whether the current vaccine or a new Omicron specific vaccine is needed.

<https://www.biopharma-reporter.com/Article/2022/01/25/Pfizer-and-BioNTech-maintain-production-estimates-of-4-billion-COVID-19-vaccine-doses-in-2022?source=patrick.net>

Israeli panel recommends fourth Covid vaccine dose for all adults

Israel's vaccine advisory panel has recommended a fourth dose of a Covid-19 shot for all adults, a world first, as the country battles a surge in infections driven by the Omicron coronavirus variant. The move follows research showing fourth doses doubled protection against symptomatic Covid-19 and increased protection against severe illness by three to five times, compared with three doses. Other countries, including the UK, US and Chile, have signed off on fourth doses for immunocompromised people, such as those living with HIV or certain transplant recipients, but have hesitated on launching a widescale second booster campaign.

<https://www.ft.com/content/8fa9fb5e-8aa8-40c0-a889-99d16e179644>

Getting infected after getting Covid triggers 'super-immunity'

People who have been vaccinated and catch Covid have 'super immunity' Infection and vaccination in any order results in 10-times more Covid antibodies Findings suggest virus will become 'mostly mild' and bring about end of crisis

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10438873/Getting-infected-getting-Covid-triggers-super-immunity.html>

Covid-19: CoronaVac immunity is strongest after boosting with a different vaccine

A booster dose of a covid-19 jab other than CoronaVac significantly increased antibodies in those who had received two doses of the Chinese vaccine, a study funded by Brazil's Ministry of Health has found. A booster dose of Pfizer Biontech's mRNA vaccine boosted antibody levels the most, followed by Oxford AstraZeneca, Janssen, and a third dose of CoronaVac. All booster vaccines were effective and safe, concluded the researchers at the University of Oxford, who co-led the study published in the Lancet. The findings will guide governments on how to boost their populations' immunity in the face of the more infectious omicron variant. CoronaVac is manufactured by Chinese pharmaceutical Sinovac and is the world's most administered coronavirus vaccine, making up two of the 10 billion vaccine doses given globally. A preprint study has found CoronaVac to be less effective than mRNA vaccines and that its effectiveness drops further against omicron,² so the findings are a boost for

the many countries in Africa, Latin America, and South-east Asia that rely on the vaccine.

<https://www.bmj.com/content/376/bmj.o210>

Covid-19: Europe could be headed for pandemic “endgame,” says WHO region chief

The rapid spread of the omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2 could see an end to the pandemic in Europe, with the variant likely to have infected 60% of people on the continent by March, the World Health Organization’s regional director for Europe has said. “It’s plausible that the region is moving towards a kind of pandemic endgame,” Hans Kluge told Agence France-Presse on 23 January. Once the current wave subsides, he said, “there will be for some weeks and months a global immunity, either thanks to the vaccine or because people have immunity because of the infection, and also lowering seasonal risk.” “We anticipate that there will be a period of quiet before covid-19 may come back towards the end of the year, but not necessarily the pandemic coming back,” Kluge said.

<https://www.bmj.com/content/376/bmj.o205>

BioNTech/Pfizer launch Omicron COVID-19 vaccine clinical trial

BioNTech/Pfizer have launched a study of a new coronavirus vaccine that targets the Omicron variant — the first retooled version of an EU-approved vaccine to begin clinical testing. As Omicron sweeps across Europe and the world, fast becoming the dominant strain in many countries, medicines regulators and public health bodies are in talks over whether existing vaccines provide enough protection. Omicron can dodge much of the defenses offered by a standard course of COVID-19 vaccines, especially as the immune response wanes. While boosting with the Wuhan-strain of vaccines has shown to protect against severe disease from Omicron, most recent data suggests that even this protection starts to wane as well. COVID-19 vaccine-makers have rushed to develop vaccines that specifically target Omicron, which was first detected in southern Africa in November. While a global decision has not yet been taken on the composition of the next-generation of COVID-19 vaccines, medicines regulators have said revamped COVID-19 jabs need to be tested in clinical trials to demonstrate what immune response they generate.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/biontech-pfizer-launch-omicron-covid-19-vaccine-clinical-trial/>

Chile to purchase 2 million Moderna COVID-19 vaccine doses

Chile, which already boasts one of the world's highest COVID-19 vaccination rates, has agreed to purchase 2 million vaccine doses from Moderna Inc, Chilean interim health minister Maria Teresa Valenzuela said on Monday. Chile has been hailed as a model for its response to the pandemic, relying mainly on vaccines from Pfizer-BioNTech, Sinovac and AstraZeneca for its inoculation program. "The agreement with Moderna is subject to approval by the Institute of Public Health, which will review the information on safety and efficacy in the coming weeks," said Valenzuela.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/chile-purchase-2-million-moderna-covid-19-vaccine-doses-2022-01-24/>

European Medicines Agency panel approves scaling up AstraZeneca COVID vaccine production

A panel of the European drug regulator on Monday approved scaling up manufacturing of AstraZeneca's (AZN.L) COVID-19 vaccine. An existing manufacturing site operated by Universal Farma in Guadalajara, Spain, will add a second filling line for the vaccine, the European Medicines Agency's human medicines committee said in a statement. The scaling up is expected to support the continued supply of the vaccine, including for donations to third countries through COVAX.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/european-medicines-agency-panel-approves-scaling-up-astrazeneca-covid-vaccine-2022-01-24/>

Germany to receive 3.8 mln doses of Novavax's new COVID vaccine in Q1

Germany expects to receive 3.8 million doses of Novavax's newly approved COVID-19 vaccine Nuvaxovid by March 20, the health ministry said on Tuesday, as the government looks to persuade

unvaccinated Germans to get a shot. Germany will receive 1.4 million doses in the week of Feb. 21 and should receive the rest of the 3.8 million doses in the subsequent few weeks. Novavax is expected to deliver 34 million doses to Germany this year. The shipment is a part of the U.S. drugmaker's deal to supply up to 200 million doses to the European Union's 27 member states.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/germany-receive-38-mln-doses-novavaxs-new-covid-vaccine-q1-2022-01-25/>

Does the world need more COVID-19 vaccines? These companies think there's still room for improvement

The ultimate COVID-19 vaccine will be able to tackle all emerging coronavirus strains, easy to store and quick to manufacture. And yes, there's still time for the stragglers who were beaten to the punch by Pfizer, BioNTech and Moderna—at least according to the companies still trying to get in line. Not to mention, just 60% of the world has been vaccinated, according to the University of Oxford's Our World in Data database. The rates are higher in richer regions like the U.S. and EU, while the need is great in less developed nations. But the window to contribute to the vaccine fight is closing. A new report from Morningstar sees demand for boosters remaining heavy in 2022 but dissipating over 2023. If a company isn't already filing for authorization, they'd better get on it. Jean-Francois Toussaint, Ph.D., head of research and development for Sanofi Pasteur, said 20 billion doses of existing vaccines are expected to be available this year. So where does that leave remaining companies, like Toussaint's, that have shots in the pipeline?

<https://www.fiercebiotech.com/biotech/does-world-need-more-covid-19-vaccines-these-companies-think-there-s-still-room-for>

'Nocebo effect': two-thirds of Covid jab reactions not caused by vaccine, study suggests

More than two-thirds of the common side-effects people experience after a Covid jab can be attributed to a negative version of the placebo effect rather than the vaccine itself, researchers claim. Scientists in the US examined data from 12 clinical trials of Covid vaccines and found that the "nocebo effect" accounted for about 76% of all common adverse reactions after the first dose and nearly 52% after the second dose. The findings suggest that a substantial proportion of milder side-effects, such as headaches, short-term fatigue, and arm pain are not produced by the constituents of the vaccine, but by other factors thought to generate the nocebo response, including anxiety, expectation and misattributing various ailments to having had the jab.

<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2022/jan/18/nocebo-effect-two-thirds-of-covid-jab-reactions-not-caused-by-vaccine-study-suggests>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Covid-19 weekly deaths in England and Wales hit 10-month high

The number of deaths involving coronavirus registered each week in England and Wales has climbed to its highest level for 10 months. A total of 1,382 deaths registered in the week ending January 14 mentioned Covid-19 on the death certificate, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This is up 50% on the previous seven days and is the highest number since 1,501 deaths were registered in the week to March 12 2021. The sharp week-on-week jump in deaths is likely to have been affected by the bank holiday on January 3, when register offices were closed, leading to a backlog of registrations needing to be cleared, the ONS said.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/england-wales-covid-ons-omicron-b2000125.html>

S.Korea's daily infections top 8000 in a first driven by Omicron

South Korea's daily new coronavirus infections topped 8,000 for the first time on Tuesday, as the highly contagious Omicron variant spreads rapidly, despite the extension of tough social distancing rules. The figure of 8,571 on Monday exceeded the previous peak of 7,848 in December, the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) said, as Omicron became dominant in the country last week, though it is less deadly than previous variants.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/skoreas-daily-covid-19-count-exceeds-8000-first-time-kdca-2022-01-25/>

Japan doubles areas under COVID curbs as cases set records

Japan expanded regions subject to tighter coronavirus curbs to cover 70% of the country on Tuesday, as the government tried to counter a record wave of COVID-19 cases caused by the Omicron variant. The measures, already in force in 16 prefectures, will take effect in a further 18 including the western prefectures of Kyoto and Osaka and remain in place until the middle of next month. Nationwide cases rose above 60,000 for the first time since the pandemic began, a tally by broadcaster Fuji TV showed on Tuesday, with the capital, Tokyo, posting 12,813 new cases while the region of Osaka reported 8,612, both records.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japan-panel-approve-extending-covid-curbs-more-regions-2022-01-25/>

Australia marks two years since first COVID case with another high death count

Australia on Tuesday recorded one of its highest number of deaths in a day from COVID-19 as an outbreak of the highly-infections Omicron variant tore through the country which marked two years since its first infection of the coronavirus. Though Australia's states and territories are refraining from a return to the lockdowns which have defined the country's pandemic response, the most populous state, New South Wales, extended a mask mandate by a month, an example of the continuous disruption brought by the virus. The same state, which came out of more than three months of hard lockdown in October, had vowed never to return to social distancing measures since its population had met a target of more than 90% vaccinated.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/australia-marks-two-years-since-first-covid-case-with-another-high-death-count-2022-01-25/>

COVID cases reported on Australian aid vessel sailing to virus-free Tonga

About two dozen cases of COVID-19 have been recorded among the crew of an Australian warship expected to arrive in coronavirus-free Tonga on Wednesday to deliver humanitarian aid, Australian authorities said on Tuesday. Tonga, hit by a massive volcanic eruption and a tsunami on Jan. 15, has asked for aid to be delivered without human contact amid concerns a COVID outbreak would be devastating for the tiny Pacific island nation. Australia's Defence Minister Peter Dutton said 23 personnel aboard the HMAS Adelaide have tested positive for COVID.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/covid-cases-reported-australian-aid-vessel-sailing-virus-free-tonga-2022-01-25/>

Germany Eyes Looser Pandemic Curbs After Omicron Surge Ebbs

Chancellor Olaf Scholz agreed with regional leaders to keep Germany's current pandemic restrictions in place to help tackle a record surge in infections while raising the possibility of relaxing some curbs once the wave subsides. The country must "stay the course" on vaccinations and social-distancing restrictions, Scholz said Monday in Berlin after regular talks with the country's 16 state premiers. "We need to continue to be cautious."

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-24/germany-eyes-looser-pandemic-curbs-after-omicron-surge-ebbs>

New Lockdown

Covid Outbreak Hits Australian Ship Heading to Virus-Free Tonga

Almost two dozen crew on board an Australian Navy ship on its way to provide relief to the Pacific island of Tonga have been diagnosed with coronavirus, potentially hampering aid efforts to the Covid-free nation. Australia's Defence Minister Peter Dutton said 23 personnel on the HMAS Adelaide had been infected, in an interview on Sky News on Tuesday. The ship left from Brisbane on Friday with a 600-strong crew as well as humanitarian and medical supplies to assist Tonga in the wake of a volcanic eruption.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-25/covid-outbreak-hits-australian-ship-heading-to-virus-free-tonga>