

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

5th Apr 2022

Lockdown Exit

Shanghai Extends Lockdown as City Tests Its 25 Million Residents for Covid

Shanghai extended lockdown measures as it concluded a day of testing of all 25 million of its residents for Covid-19 Monday, aided by thousands of medical workers who arrived over the weekend from across the country. Late Monday, which was meant to be the final day of lockdown, the municipal government said the lockdown would continue until after the authorities finished evaluating the situation, including reviewing the results of the mass-testing effort. It said by evening, it was nearly done with the citywide testing. Shanghai had planned a two-phase lockdown, in which half the city's residents would be confined to their homes at a time, depending on which side of the Huangpu River they lived. The first four-day lockdown of residents to the east and south of the river was to have ended Friday. The second stage was due to end at 3 a.m. Tuesday.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/shanghai-orders-snap-covid-tests-for-25-million-locked-down-residents-11649053546>

China Covid Crisis Grows With Cases Surging, New Sub-Strains

China's Covid-19 situation is on a knife's edge, with a lockdown of its financial hub intensified over the weekend amid a surge in new cases and reports of new sub-strains of the omicron variant emerging. The country, which managed to live much of the pandemic effectively virus free after quashing its initial outbreak in Wuhan, is experiencing its biggest jump in daily infections since 2020. Shanghai reported 9,006 cases for Sunday as the city prepares to test all its 25 million residents in another effort to weed out infections, amid accounts of un-reported deaths in a nursing home and ongoing food shortages. After announcing a partial lockdown a week ago, the uptick in cases now means Shanghai's entire population is now under some form of movement restrictions.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/china-covid-crisis-grows-with-cases-surging-new-sub-strains/ar-AAVOX0W>

China Variants and Omicron XE Put Fresh Focus on Covid Mutations

The disclosure of new Covid variants emerging in China and the rise of a potentially more transmissible strain in the U.K. has recast the spotlight on the ongoing risk of the virus, even as health experts say there's no reason to panic. The World Health Organization said a hybrid of two omicron strains -- BA.1 and BA.2 -- that was first detected in the U.K. and dubbed XE could be the most transmissible variant yet. It is estimated to spread 10% more easily than BA.2, which itself was more transmissible than the original omicron famous for its ease of penetration. Meanwhile in China, which is experiencing its biggest outbreak since Wuhan, authorities have disclosed two novel omicron subvariants that don't match any existing sequences. It's unclear if the infections were one-off events of little significance, or if they may be a sign of problems ahead.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-04/china-variants-and-omicron-xe-put-fresh-focus-on-covid-mutations>

Gilead's remdesivir fails to show benefit in European trial; no fetus risk seen with first trimester vaccination

The following is a summary of some recent studies on COVID-19. They include research that warrants further study to corroborate the findings and that has yet to be certified by peer review. Two promising drugs for COVID-19 fail to deliver. Two drugs that looked like promising treatments for COVID-19 in preliminary studies - remdesivir for hospitalized patients and camostat for patients who are not seriously ill - failed to show a benefit in those groups in randomized controlled trials,

researchers reported in two separate papers.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/gileads-remdesivir-fails-show-benefit-european-trial-no-fetus-risk-seen-with-2022-04-04/>

U.S. Senator Romney announces deal on \$10 billion in COVID funding

An agreement to provide \$10 billion in U.S. funding for COVID-19 aid has been reached in the Senate, lawmakers said on Monday. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, the top Democrat in the chamber, and Republican Senator Mitt Romney hailed the deal, but Schumer said he was disappointed that an agreement on \$5 billion of global health funding had not also been reached. The deal provides \$10 billion in funding for COVID needs and therapeutics by repurposing unspent COVID funds. It is well below the \$22.5 billion the Biden administration had sought.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-senator-romney-announces-deal-10-billion-covid-funding-2022-04-04/>

Covid-19: Vaccine passes gone by midnight - but businesses can keep using them

Four months after becoming the entry key to many events, bars and restaurants, gyms, hairdressers, sports and faith-based gatherings, vaccine passes will soon be optional for hosts. My Vaccine Pass - brought in as part of the Government's Covid-19 protection framework - will no longer be required from 11.59pm Monday, although businesses will still be able to use the system if they want. Those supplying basic needs, such as supermarkets, pharmacies, petrol stations, public transport, schools and health services, were exempt, but were a legal requirement for many other close-proximity businesses. Also from 11.59pm Monday, some government vaccine mandates for workers will be removed. Those still covered include health and disability sector workers, including aged-care workers, along with prison staff and border and MIQ workers.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/coronavirus/128252286/covid19-vaccine-passes-gone-by-midnight--but-businesses-can-keep-using-them>

Sweden to offer fourth COVID vaccine jab to people aged 65 and above

Sweden will give a fourth shot of COVID-19 vaccine to people aged 65 and above to boost their defences against the disease, the health agency said on Monday. "For people aged 65 and over, it is now four months since the previous vaccine dose, and the protective effect of the vaccine diminishes over time," the Health Agency said in a statement. Sweden had previously offered a fourth jab to people aged 80 or older.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/sweden-offer-fourth-covid-vaccine-jab-people-aged-65-above-2022-04-04/>

Exit Strategies

Thai PM takes delivery of 3.2 million Pfizer vaccines donated by France; Covid-19 cases still registering above 24,000 in country

The French ambassador to Thailand on Monday handed over 3.2 million doses of the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine to Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha. Ambassador Thierry Mathou met Prayut at Government House on Monday morning to formally hand over the vaccine shipment donated to Thailand by France. After the meeting, government spokesman Thanakorn Wangboonkrongchana said Prayut thanked France for the donation and lauded the envoy for helping coordinate close bilateral ties.

<https://www.thestar.com.my/aseanplus/aseanplus-news/2022/04/04/thai-pm-takes-delivery-of-32-million-pfizer-vaccines-donated-by-france-covid-19-cases-still-registering-above-24000-in-country>

WTO official: IP waiver on COVID vaccines would not facilitate access immediately

The negotiations for a waiver on intellectual property (IP) rights in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) are still ongoing, but a final agreement would not immediately loosen up access to COVID-19 vaccines and treatments, according to a WTO official. There is an established principle to override

intellectual property rights “baked” into the WTO TRIPS Agreement (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights), said Antony Taubman, director of the intellectual property, government procurement and competition division in the WTO.

<https://www.euractiv.com/section/health-consumers/news/wto-official-an-ip-waiver-on-covid-vaccines-would-not-loosen-up-access-immediately/>

How to book a Covid vaccine for children with 5 to 11-year-olds now eligible

The Covid-19 vaccine is being extended to children aged between 5 and 11, giving five million more Britons access to the jab. It comes with case numbers across the UK extremely high, due to the spread of the highly infectious BA.2 offshoot of the Omicron variant. The children will be given a dose of Pfizer a third of the size of that given to those aged 12 and over. There will be a follow-up jab 12 weeks later. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation approved the jab for under-12s in February, but the NHS has been prioritising fourth doses for the clinically vulnerable and over-75s.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/health/how-to-book-covid-vaccine-children-nhs-jab-aged-5-11-england-1556173>

Hong Kong university entrance exams ‘to go ahead as scheduled’ as coronavirus infections continue to fall

Special centres will be set up at the Hong Kong government’s isolation facility at Penny’s Bay for university entrance exam candidates who are close contacts of Covid-19 patients or infected themselves, with the annual assessments scheduled to start from April 22. Education authorities on Monday said candidates who chose to sit the Diploma of Secondary Education (DSE) exams at the special centres would then have to remain at the facility for a full stint in quarantine, which lasts at least seven days, depending on their vaccination status

<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/education/article/3172980/hong-kong-university-entrance-exams-go-ahead-scheduled>

U.S. FDA advisers to discuss additional COVID vaccine boosters

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration's expert advisers will discuss the timing of additional COVID-19 vaccine boosters and the people eligible for the extra shots in a meeting later this week, the health agency said on Monday. The independent advisers will also discuss at the April 6 meeting the FDA's role in how future versions of COVID vaccines are created to help fight new variants. It could be similar to the current process of selecting the composition of the seasonal flu shot, where regulators pick the strain to use for the coming year's vaccines, FDA staff said in briefing documents

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-fda-advisers-discuss-additional-covid-vaccine-boosters-2022-04-04/>

It's time for a new COVID-19 vaccination strategy in Ontario, experts urge

Ontario is entering a sixth wave of COVID-19 with few remaining public health measures and experts say now is the time for a renewed vaccination strategy aimed at boosting third-dose uptake, shots for kids and preparing for wider fourth doses. When first and second doses became available, Ontario - and Canada at large - was the envy of the world in how quickly the population got vaccinated, said Dr. Fahad Razak, an internist and member of the province's science advisory table. But while 91 per cent of Ontarians 12 and older have received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, only about 60 per cent have received three.

<https://www.cp24.com/news/it-s-time-for-a-new-covid-19-vaccination-strategy-in-ontario-experts-urge-1.5846311>

Singapore, Oh So Carefully, Lets Down Its Masks

The most amazing thing about the margarita in my hand at 10:35 p.m. Tuesday was that it was there at all. It was the first evening of a new, relatively relaxed Covid regime in Singapore. Strict curbs on the late-night sale of alcohol were lifted, masks ceased to be compulsory outdoors and social gatherings could number 10 people. Singing was no longer outlawed. This was a moment worth toasting, cautiously. While the changes stop short of a revolution — the city-state isn’t known

for spontaneous lurches — they are nevertheless significant. Singapore mandated face coverings outdoors longer than many places, and made transgressions punishable.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2022-04-03/singapore-cautiously-embraces-its-new-rules-on-masks-dining>

Partisan Exits

EasyJet cancels 100 flights due to Covid absences

British travellers are facing Easter holiday disruption after airlines cancelled more than 120 flights and Eurotunnel warned of three hour delays. EasyJet and British Airways blamed staff absences from Covid for cancellations, while Eurotunnel said a broken down train caused delays. Some schools have broken up for Easter - the first holiday since the end of the pandemic travel restrictions. That's led to rising demand and frustration for holidaymakers. Flight cancellations were down to a combination of factors which had come together in "a perfect storm", Simon Calder, travel correspondent at The Independent, told the BBC. "We have got very high levels of Covid in the nation and that is affecting the transport industry. But there are also more underlying problems which go back to the start of Covid," he said.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-60976958>

Senate Reaches Deal on Covid Funding That Leaves Out Global Aid

Senate Democrats and Republicans have struck a deal to provide \$10 billion for coronavirus vaccines and therapeutics after Democrats dropped a last-minute attempt to include global vaccination funds in the bill. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Republican Senator Mitt Romney of Utah, who had been leading negotiations on the package, announced the agreement Monday. It meets GOP demands that any new Covid-19 funds be paid for with unspent funds from earlier pandemic relief packages. The bill would provide far less money than the \$22.5 billion that President Joe Biden sought early last month, though lawmakers widely expect another infusion will be needed, especially if a new variant of the disease spreads.

https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-04/senate-reaches-deal-on-covid-funding-that-leaves-out-global-aid?utm_source=google&utm_medium=bd&cmpid=google

Covid Vaccines for Kids Are Dividing Divorced Parents

In late 2021, Adele Grote, a divorced mother of two in Minneapolis, took her children to a vaccination clinic at the Mall of America. But when her 13-year-old daughter called her father to let him know they were getting the shot, Ms. Grote knew they would have to leave without it. Just over a quarter of children between ages 5 and 11 in the United States are fully vaccinated, according to a New York Times database; among older kids, ages 12 to 17, the rate is 59 percent. For parents who have yet to vaccinate their children, the reasons for hesitation vary.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/04/well/covid-vaccine-divorced-parents.html>

Vaccine hesitancy: What causes it, what can change it? - study

In the time since the coronavirus vaccine has been made available to the public, there have been many instances of hesitancy, reluctance, and even refusal to be vaccinated. A new study published by the Israel Journal of Health Policy Research has examined this phenomenon and discovered that there are several distinct phases of vaccine hesitancy, all presenting in different ways. The peer-reviewed study entitled "Understanding the phases of vaccine hesitancy during the COVID-19 pandemic" examines the distinct categories under which vaccine-hesitant people fall and the way in which socio-economic background, circumstances, and the changing phases of the pandemic itself have affected the reluctance some show when it comes to the vaccine.

<https://www.jpost.com/health-and-wellness/coronavirus/article-703187>

More than 8 million people reject offer of Covid-19 booster despite record infections

More than eight million people have turned down the offer of a booster vaccine against Covid-19 despite the UK's infection rate hitting its highest ever level last week. The Government is under pressure to ramp up its efforts to persuade more people to come forward for a third jab, at the same time as encouraging over-75s to accept a second booster. On Monday NHS England will start vaccinating children aged five to 11 with some centres fitted out with games and pets to make young children feel comfortable.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/covid-booster-8-million-people-reject-offer-vaccine-despite-record-infection-rate-1555159>

UK PM Johnson has not received a fine for COVID breaches - spokesman

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has not received a police fine relating to breaches of COVID regulations, his spokesman said on Monday. Police have begun issuing fines after receiving evidence from an internal government investigation into lockdown parties in Johnson's Downing Street offices. Some events remain under investigation and further fines may be issued.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-pm-johnson-has-not-received-fine-covid-breaches-spokesman-2022-04-04/>

Continued Lockdown

Drone footage shows deserted Shanghai as city remains in lockdown - video

Covid-19 cases in China's most populous city of Shanghai have risen again as millions remain isolated at home under a sweeping lockdown. Drone footage shows the usually bustling city empty of people and traffic. Almost all 26 million residents are under some form of lockdown. Those who test positive are taken to large quarantine centres. Jane Polubotko, a 30-year-old who works for a local music tech company, was taken to the Shanghai New International Expo Center after testing positive. 'We get food three times a day, the food is OK,' she said. 'There are no showers here and we're not allowed to receive any parcels from the outside world'

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2022/apr/04/drone-footage-show-a-deserted-shanghai-as-the-city-remains-in-lockdown-video>

Covid cases rise in Shanghai as millions remain in lockdown

Covid-19 cases in China's largest city of Shanghai have risen again as millions remain isolated at home under a sweeping lockdown. Health officials on Sunday reported 438 confirmed cases detected over the previous 24 hours, along with 7,788 asymptomatic cases. Both figures were up slightly from the day before. Shanghai with its 26 million people last week began a two-stage lockdown, with residents of the eastern Pudong section supposed to be allowed to leave their homes Friday, while their neighbours in the western Puxi section underwent their own four-day isolation period.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/03/covid-cases-rise-in-shanghai-as-millions-remain-in-lockdown>

Scientific Viewpoint

List of Official Covid Symptoms Expanded to Include Sore Throat and Fatigue

The official list of Covid-19 symptoms has been expanded to include nine new signs of illness. The extension of the symptoms list to include ailments such as sore throat, fatigue and headache could help to reduce infections, one expert said. News that the symptoms list has been updated emerged just days after the Government ended the offer of free universal Covid-19 tests. It comes as Covid infection levels have hit a record high in the UK, with almost five million people estimated to be currently infected.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-04/list-of-covid-symptoms-expanded-as-free-testing-ends>

Study: Vaccine protects most cancer patients from COVID, but risk remains higher for patients with blood cancers

Using the nation's largest COVID-19 data resource, a researcher at the Indiana University Melvin and

Bren Simon Comprehensive Cancer Center found the COVID-19 vaccine protected most cancer patients from getting COVID. However, patients with certain types of cancer have a higher and widely varied risk of breakthrough COVID infections after receiving the COVID vaccine. Jing Su, PhD, assistant professor in the Indiana University School of Medicine Department of Biostatistics was the lead investigator for the study published in the Journal of Clinical Oncology. He is also the core associate director of real-world data for the cancer center's Biostatistics and Data Management Core. Su led a team of 13 investigators from 10 research institutes across the country to analyze data from the National COVID Cohort Collaborative (N3C) at the National Institutes of Health, including another researcher at IU School of Medicine, Xiaochun Li, PhD, a professor of biostatistics and health data sciences.

<https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/948646>

COVID-19 vaccine not associated with birth defects detectable on ultrasound

The exclusion of pregnant patients in initial COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials left many patients and doctors wondering how the vaccine might affect pregnant patients and their unborn babies. A new Northwestern Medicine study has found the vaccine is not associated with birth defects that are detectable on ultrasound. "This is yet another important piece of data that helps bridge the chasm that was left when pregnant individuals were excluded from those initial vaccine trials," said corresponding author Dr. Emily Miller, chief of obstetrics at Northwestern Medicine and assistant professor of maternal fetal medicine at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. The study will be published April 4 in the journal JAMA Pediatrics.

<https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/948382>

China joins race to build a better Covid-19 vaccine with circRNA tech

China has joined the race to build a better Covid-19 vaccine using engineered circular RNA, a form of biotechnology that scientists hope can lead to cheaper and more effective shots. A group of scientists from Peking University, the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences and Peking Union Medical College in Beijing have been testing a circular RNA (circRNA) vaccine candidate targeting the tip of the coronavirus's spike protein, which the virus uses to dock with the body's receptors and cause infection. The team have released a preprint paper of the results of laboratory tests and animal trials and the study is being reviewed by scientific journal Cell. Companies and scientists are exploring the vaccine potential in transforming linear RNA into a circular shape.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/science/article/3173046/china-joins-race-build-better-covid-19-vaccine-circna-tech>

Biological E to get mRNA technology from WHO to produce Covid vaccines

In a mkaocity-based vaccine maker Biological E. Limited on Monday said the company was selected as a recipient of mRNA technology to produce COVID-19 vaccines from the World Health Organisation. A press release from BE Limited said the WHO's Advisory Committee on Vaccine Product Development (ACPDV) selected the firm after examining a number of proposals from India, as a recipient of mRNA (ribonucleic acid) technology from the global health body's technology transfer hub.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/biological-e-to-get-mrna-technology-from-who-to-produce-covid-vaccines-122040400805_1.html

COVID-19 vaccine can cause temporary delay in menstruation

There have been increasing reports of changes to the menstrual cycle of younger individuals receiving coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccinations in the United Kingdom. Notably, the majority of people experiencing these changes after immunization find that their period returns to normal by the next cycle. Furthermore, there is no indication that COVID-19 vaccination has a deleterious effect on female fertility.

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20220403/COVID-19-vaccine-can-cause-temporary-delay-in-menstruation.aspx>

Low number of Covid cases now as India chose right vaccine: Serum CEO

Serum Institute of India CEO Adar Poonawalla on Monday said the low number of COVID-19 cases at the moment was because the country chose the right vaccine. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the 'Alternate Fuel Conclave', he said the fourth wave, if at all it occurs, will hopefully be mild. Speaking on the booster dose, he said, "About the booster dose, we have appealed to the government, because everyone who needs to travel, needs the booster dose. They (government) are having internal discussions and a policy on booster dose may be announced soon."

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/low-number-of-covid-cases-now-as-india-chose-right-vaccine-serum-ceo-122040400846_1.html

Coronavirus vaccine: WHO suspends UN supply of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin vaccine for COVID-19

The World Health Organization said on Saturday it has suspended supply through United Nations agencies of COVID-19 vaccine Covaxin, produced by India's Bharat Biotech, to allow the manufacturer to upgrade facilities and address deficiencies found in an inspection. The WHO asked countries that have received the vaccine to take appropriate actions, according to the statement, but did not specify what the appropriate actions would be. The WHO said the vaccine is effective and no safety concerns exist, but the suspension of production for export will result in the interruption of Covaxin supply. It said the suspension is in response to the outcomes of WHO post emergency use listing (EUL) inspection conducted from March 14 to 22, and the vaccine maker has indicated its commitment to suspend production of Covaxin for export. Bharat Biotech did not immediately respond to a request for comment sent outside business hours.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/health-fitness/health-news/who-suspends-un-supply-of-bharat-biotechs-covaxin-vaccine-for-covid-19/articleshow/90620168.cms>

Covid had devastating toll on poor and low-income communities in US

The devastating impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on poor and low-income communities across America is laid bare in a new report released on Monday that concludes that while the virus did not discriminate between rich and poor, society and government did. As the US draws close to the terrible landmark of 1 million deaths from coronavirus, the glaringly disproportionate human toll that has been exacted is exposed by the Poor People's Pandemic Report. Based on a data analysis of more than 3,000 counties across the US, it finds that people in poorer counties have died overall at almost twice the rate of those in richer counties. Looking at the most deadly surges of the virus, the disparity in death rates grows even more pronounced.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/04/us-covid-devastating-toll-poor-low-income-communities>

COVID-19 led to unprecedented decline in global life expectancy

The COVID-19 pandemic reduced the world's life expectancy by about 2 years, according to recent estimates published in Population and Development Review. "Since 1950, annual declines of that magnitude had only been observed on rare occasions, such as Cambodia in the 1970s, Rwanda in the 1990s, and possibly some sub-Saharan African nations at the peak of the AIDS pandemic," wrote Patrick Heuveline, a professor of sociology and the associate director of the California Center for Population Research at UCLA.

<https://www.healio.com/news/primary-care/20220404/covid19-led-to-unprecedented-decline-in-global-life-expectancy>

UK Covid symptoms list expanded with nine more signs of illness

The official list of Covid-19 symptoms on the NHS has been extended to cover nine new symptoms, including sore throat, fatigue and headache. They join the three symptoms of a fever, a new and persistent cough, and a loss or change in taste or smell, according to nhs.uk. Extending the list may help reduce infections by helping people detect whether they may have Covid; however, it coincides

with the end of the offer of free universal Covid-19 tests to help people confirm whether they have the virus. Covid infection levels have hit a record high in the UK, with almost 5 million people estimated to be infected.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/04/uk-covid-symptoms-list-expanded-with-nine-more-signs-of-illness>

U.S. poor died at much higher rate from COVID than rich - report

Americans living in poorer counties died during the pandemic at almost twice the rate of those in rich counties, a study released Monday by the Poor People's Campaign showed. The study, based on income and death data from over 3,200 U.S. counties, shows an even bigger gap during the Delta variant that made up the U.S.'s fourth coronavirus wave, when people living in the lowest income counties died at five times the rate of those in the highest income counties. The 300 counties with the highest death rates have an average poverty rate of 45%, and household median incomes on average \$23,000 lower than counties with lower rates.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-poor-died-much-higher-rate-covid-than-rich-report-2022-04-04/>

Roche says U.S. FDA grants priority review to Actemra for COVID-19

Roche said on Monday the U.S. Food and Drug administration granted priority review to its Actemra/RoActemra for the treatment of COVID-19 in hospitalised adults. "If approved, Actemra/RoActemra would be the first U.S. FDA-approved immunomodulator for the treatment of COVID-19 in hospitalised patients," Roche said in a statement, adding that more than 1 million people hospitalised with COVID-19 had been treated with Actemra/RoActemra worldwide since the beginning of the pandemic.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/roche-says-us-fda-grants-priority-review-actemra-covid-19-2022-04-04/>

New Covid-19 variant Omicron XE found in the UK which is a cross mutation of the BA.1 and BA.2 strains

Health experts have confirmed that a new variant of Coronavirus has been found in the United Kingdom. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) have said that they are looking at the XE variant - which is a cross mutation of the BA.1 and BA.2 Omicron strains that recently swarmed the nation. The new variant is what is technically known as a 'recombinant' according to professionals, however the UKHSA are reported saying that it's too early to know whether it is more transmissible than the previous versions of the virus - reports Wales Online. The officials say that 637 cases of XE have been detected in England alone as of March 22, which would make it a mere fraction of the tens of thousands of total cases being reported daily at the time of writing, The Independent has reported.

<https://www.chroniclive.co.uk/news/health/coronavirus-new-variant-omicron-xe-23581839>

CanSinoBIO's mRNA COVID vaccine candidate cleared for trials in China

Chinese vaccine developer CanSino Biologics Inc (CanSinoBIO) said on Monday its potential COVID-19 vaccine using the messenger RNA (mRNA) technology has been approved by China's medical products regulator to enter clinical trials. Unlike other major countries, China is yet to approve any foreign-made mRNA vaccines such as that produced by U.S.-German duo Pfizer Inc (PFE.N) and BioNTech SE. With around 88% of its 1.4 billion population already vaccinated, China is trailing several domestically developed mRNA vaccine candidates, including one candidate that is being tested in a large, Phase 3 clinical trial.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/cansinobios-mrna-covid-vaccine-candidate-cleared-trials-china-2022-04-04/>

Coronavirus Resurgence

COVID-19 hospitalisations rising in NSW, Victoria

Hospitalisation numbers for COVID-19 patients have risen in both New South Wales and Victoria,

though intensive care numbers remain fairly steady. NSW recorded 15,572 new COVID-19 cases today, down from 16,807 yesterday and 16,199 last Monday. In the past week, hospitalisations have risen from 1270 to 1418, with 56 in intensive care, compared to 55 last Monday.

<https://www.9news.com.au/national/coronavirus-australia-updates-new-case-numbers-deaths-fourth-jab-rollout-who-is-eligible/708fad4a-5b73-467d-b408-f4198ec8f6d1>

Hong Kong reports 3138 new COVID-19 cases

Hong Kong health authorities reported 3,138 new COVID-19 infections on Monday, down from 3,709 the previous day, and 90 deaths as cases in the global financial centre continue to fall.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/hong-kong-reports-3138-new-covid-19-cases-2022-04-04/>

Surging COVID cases force easyJet to cancel UK flights over staff shortages

A renewed surge of COVID-19 in Britain has forced airlines including easyJet to cancel hundreds of flights in recent days as staff sickness levels soar. England dropped all its coronavirus restrictions earlier this year, including a legal requirement to self-isolate when testing positive and the need to wear masks in public places. Cases started to surge in Britain near the beginning of last month and by the end of the March 26 week, one in 13 people were believed to be positive with the virus, the highest figure since the pandemic began.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/easyjet-cancels-flights-due-covid-sickness-2022-04-04/>

COVID-19: Despite the end of free testing, the virus is stronger than ever

You'd be forgiven for thinking the COVID pandemic was on its way out. But today's data show that, from the virus' perspective at least, it's stronger than ever. On the same day free COVID testing comes to an end in England, infection levels have reached the highest ever recorded.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-despite-the-end-of-free-testing-the-virus-is-stronger-than-ever-12579821>

China Covid Crisis Grows With Cases Surging, New Sub-Strains

China's Covid-19 situation is on a knife edge, with a lockdown of its financial hub intensifying over the weekend amid a surge in new cases and reports of new sub-strains of the omicron variant emerging. The country, which managed to live much of the pandemic effectively virus free after quashing its initial outbreak in Wuhan, is experiencing its biggest jump in daily infections since 2020. Shanghai reported 9,006 cases for Sunday as the city prepares to test all its 25 million residents in another effort to weed out infections, amid accounts of un-reported deaths in a nursing home and ongoing food shortages.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-04/china-s-covid-crisis-grows-with-cases-surging-new-sub-variants>

China sends military, doctors to Shanghai to test 26 million residents for COVID

Shanghai will remain under lockdown as it reviews results of an exercise to test all of its 26 million residents for COVID-19, authorities said on Monday. The city began its two-stage lockdown on March 28, initially in Shanghai's eastern districts, and later expanded to cover the whole city. The curbs, which have massively disrupted daily life and business operations in China's financial hub, were initially scheduled to end at 5 a.m. local time (9 p.m. GMT) on Tuesday. "The city will continue to implement seal and control management and strictly implement 'staying at home', except for medical treatment," the city government said on its official WeChat account.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-sends-military-doctors-shanghai-test-26-mln-residents-covid-2022-04-04/>

Hong Kong reports 3138 new COVID-19 cases

Hong Kong health authorities reported 3,138 new COVID-19 infections on Monday, down from 3,709 the previous day, and 90 deaths as cases in the global financial centre continue to fall.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/hong-kong-reports-3138-new-covid-19-cases-2022-04-04/>

New Lockdown

Western diplomats ask China not to separate COVID-positive children from parents

Western diplomats have expressed concern about separating children from their parents as part of COVID curbs - a situation that has arisen in Shanghai as the government tries to stamp out the spread of the virus. The city has been separating COVID-positive children from their parents, citing epidemic prevention requirements, which has prompted a widespread public outcry. Diplomats from more than 30 countries have written to the Chinese foreign ministry urging authorities not to take such a step. "We request that under no circumstances should parents and children be separated," said a letter written by the French consulate in Shanghai that was addressed to the foreign affairs office of Shanghai on March 31.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/western-diplomats-ask-china-not-separate-covid-positive-children-parents-2022-04-04/>

Shanghai to extend lockdown of 26 million people as it reviews COVID test results

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