

# COVID-19 Daily Briefing: July 21<sup>st</sup>

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## 1. Summary

### VACCINES

- **OXFORD VACCINE CANDIDATE**: The Oxford COVID Vaccine Trial Group has reported that their vaccine candidate boosts antibody responses against SARS-CoV-2 and neutralisation of the virus in vitro. This trial also reported no serious adverse events associated with the vaccine. These results indicate the suitability of this vaccine candidate to progress to larger-scale trials to test its efficacy against infection.
- **EARLY ACCESS**: The UK Government has agreed deals with the pharmaceutical companies BioNTech/Pfizer and Valneva for early access to 30 and 60 million doses, respectively, of their two vaccine candidates. This agreement is in addition to 100 million doses of the Oxford vaccine candidate, being developed by AstraZeneca. However, the chair of the UK Vaccine Taskforce has cautioned against over-optimism. Whilst there are many promising candidates, there may never be a vaccine, or if one is approved it may only reduce symptoms, rather than preventing infection.
- **WUHAN VACCINE**: A phase 2 trial of a vaccine candidate in Wuhan, aiming to find the best dose for an efficacy trial, reports that both tested doses induce a significant immune response against infection with SARS-CoV-2. Adverse reactions, such as fever, headache, muscle pain and the like, were observed in 9% and 1% of participants receiving the higher and lower dose of the vaccine, respectively. No serious adverse reactions were reported by any of the 508 trial participants given the vaccine candidate.

### ETHNIC MINORITIES

- **MENTAL HEALTH**: Existing mental health disparities faced by BAME groups have been exacerbated by the pandemic. There is very little COVID-19-specific guidance on the needs of these groups, who face greater risk of hospitalisation and mortality. Steps such as ensuring mental health information is available to those with English as a second language, using culturally grounded understandings, maintaining levels of service, and considering modifications to existing interventions could help mitigate some of the risks to minority groups. Guidance in this area should be produced on the basis of evidence.

### CANCER

- **ADDITIONAL DEATHS**: More than 3,000 avoidable cancer deaths, resulting from diagnostic delays, are expected in the UK over the next five years, corresponding to around 60,000 years of life lost across England alone. Routine cancer screening services are facing a major backlog as a result of nation-wide lockdown; urgent policy interventions will be required to address this issue.
- **DELAYED DIAGNOSIS**: Throughout the UK, lockdown referrals via the urgent 2-week-wait pathway for suspected cancer fell by up to 84%. This disruption of cancer care is likely to be an ongoing issue until a vaccine or effective treatment is identified. Furthermore, unlike acute pathologies such as stroke and heart attack, the true excess mortality due to COVID-19-related disruption to cancer pathways will continue to accumulate for 10 years or longer. As a result, additional capacity to address the diagnostic backlog should be provided to minimise deaths from diagnostic delays that will otherwise add to those predicted due to expected presentational delays.

### 3. Quick Summaries

#### [COVID-19: England could need another lockdown in the winter, say government's chief advisors](#)

- **LOCKDOWN:** *Journal news article.* The CMO and CSA have confirmed, in evidence to the House of Lords, that measures such as face coverings, social distancing, contact tracing and isolation could be necessary into 2021. Additional measures, such as reintroducing lockdowns, may be required during the winter, due to the prevalence of other annual winter viruses and as little is known about the transmission risk of COVID-19 in colder temperatures.

#### [COVID-19 as a global challenge: towards an inclusive and sustainable future](#)

- **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:** *Comment article.* The global COVID-19 pandemic, national lockdowns, and the resulting economic crisis will set back efforts to address the UN sustainable development goals. Policy makers, researchers, and governments must work together to develop urgent responses to the racial, economic, social, and gender inequalities which have been highlighted by the global health crisis.

#### [Communication missteps during COVID-19 hurt those already most at risk](#)

- **INFODEMIC:** Groups most at risk from COVID-19 often have a lingering distrust in official sources, and are also the most vulnerable to the impacts of an 'misinfodemic'. This can create the perfect conditions for misinformation to proliferate. Communications strategies should be tailored to the needs of different groups, including working with community organisations and leaders.

### 4. Longer Reading

#### [COVID-19, nationalism, and the politics of crisis: A scholarly exchange](#)

- **NATIONALISM:** *Exchange article.* The COVID-19 crisis has the potential to reinforce nationalist politics around the world. The pandemic could heighten the risk of ethnic and national conflict resulting in large-scale warfare, as global tensions have been rising, particularly between China and the USA. These forces could be amplified by nations turning further inward, by pursuing protectionist trade policies, and rejecting collaborative attempts to combat the virus.

#### [Digital citizenship during a global pandemic: moving beyond digital literacy](#)

- **REMOTE LEARNING:** *Commentary.* Lockdowns across the world have necessitated the rapid move from in-person teaching to digital learning for many educational institutions. Societies can take this as an opportunity to consider what skills we wish to teach our children in the face of an uncertain future. To this end, the International Society for Technology in Education has set out a [framework](#) to help guide the development of students into compassionate members of their community.