

# COVID-19 Daily Briefing: June 1<sup>st</sup>

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## 1. Summary

### LOCKDOWN

- **GOVERNMENT INTERVENTIONS** have been shown to have a significant impact on the effective contact rate (ECR). Baseline contact rates before lockdown varied strongly between countries, with Italy and Spain having very high ones and Sweden a very low one. By the end of study period, ECRs were broadly similar, possibly because citizens were only interacting for essential needs, irrespective of the exact laws. Notably, although Sweden's ECR dropped, it moved from being the lowest nationally to being the highest as the government did not impose a formal lockdown. The UK had the highest ECR of those countries which did impose a lockdown.
- **GERMANY**: As each of Germany's sixteen states implemented the easing of lockdown in slightly different ways, it is possible to directly determine the impact of differing policies. Restriction of mass gatherings has had the largest effect on the transmission of the virus, and the closure of borders has had minimal further effect.

### MEDICINE

- **HYDROXYCHLOROQUINE SAFETY**: (hydroxy)chloroquine (HCQ) is an antimalarial drug, repurposed to treat COVID-19 patients. The authors of this literature review of studies into the efficacy and safety of administering this drug to COVID-19 patients found that it is unlikely to improve outcomes, has a high probability of adverse effects in patients, and leads to a potential increase in mortality rate. It is likely that the use of this drug in hospitals has been unsafe, precluding definitive judgment on drug safety until the completion of high-quality randomised clinical trials.
- **CANCER PATIENTS**: A multicentre study of adults with malignant tumours indicates that cancer patients infected with SARS-CoV-2 are considerably more likely to deteriorate into severe COVID-19 than those without cancer. Advanced tumour stage was identified as a risk factor for this group. Rigorous personal protective provisions are necessary for cancer patients, survivors and their carers.

### CONTACT TRACING

- **EFFICACY**: For a contact tracing application to be totally effective, it will likely require high levels of adoption amongst the population, as well as being combined with randomised testing to detect asymptomatic individuals. Balancing false negatives and false positives will be key. Too many false negatives will result in ineffective containment of the virus, and too many false positives will result in large portions of the population needlessly self-isolating.

## 3. Quick Summaries

### Mitigating the risks of surgery during the COVID-19 pandemic

- **SURGERY**: *Comment article*. Due to lockdowns across the world, many elective surgeries have been cancelled or postponed. As nations attempt to return to providing normal levels of medical care, it is vital to understand the implications of COVID-19 infection for surgical patients. High rates of poor outcomes, including mortality, have been observed in large numbers of postsurgical patients with COVID-19. Pathological processes caused by the disease may be exacerbated by surgery and immobilisation.

## Testing for COVID-19

- **UK PREVALENCE:** *News article in a journal.* An antibody surveillance study led by the Office of National statistics found that 17% of people in London and 5% elsewhere tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 antibodies. It is not yet clear whether these antibodies will provide immunity from further infection.

## Poor clinical outcomes for patients with cancer during the COVID-19 pandemic

- **COVID-19 & CANCER:** *Comment article.* Various studies have demonstrated that cancer patients are at greater risk of severe COVID-19, with recent chemotherapy treatments highlighted as a particular risk factor. Delaying cancer treatments could improve outcomes for some COVID-19 patients but should be done with extreme caution.

## 4. Longer Reading

### Report 25: Response to COVID-19 in South Korea and implications for lifting stringent interventions

- **SOUTH KOREA.** *Imperial College Report.* South Korea has been successful in coping with COVID-19 without a national lockdown. This success seems to be due to a combination of their high testing capacity, extensive contact tracing, and cluster-based management early in the epidemic. However, the success of South Korea would be difficult to replicate internationally for COVID-19 as they already had many of the necessary mechanisms in place following the MERS outbreak in 2015.

### Time courses of COVID-19 infection and local variation in socioeconomic and health disparities in England

- **SOCIETY:** *Preprint journal article.* Using Public Health England data, clusters of local authorities were identified and grouped by COVID-19 trajectory. Two major groupings were identified: one 'high trajectory' with high peak infection levels, and one low. Comparisons between clusters showed a positive association between socioeconomic factors (including proportion of black and Asian residents, deprivation scores, and lower proportions of older adults) and the peak infection level. Adjusting for deprivation, population density, and health disparities was unable to fully explain the greater proportion of black residents in 'high trajectory' authorities.

### Loneliness during lockdown: trajectories and predictors during the COVID-19 pandemic in 35,712 adults in the UK

- **LONELINESS:** *Preprint journal article.* Younger adults, women, people on low incomes, the economically inactive, and those with pre-existing mental health conditions were more susceptible to loneliness during the lockdown. Loneliness is a significant public health concern as it can lead to depression, generalised anxiety, and suicidal ideation. *See SfL Mental Health report for more details.*