

COVID-19 Daily Briefing: June 5th

DISCLAIMER: Scientists for Labour are a voluntary organisation, and collating this research takes a significant amount of time. We cannot claim that this document is comprehensive, necessarily accurate in all regards, or that it covers all developments. PLEASE NOTE THAT, DUE TO UNAVAILABILITY, OUR USUAL EXPERT FACT-CHECK WAS NOT CONDUCTED TODAY.

1. Summary

GLOBAL HEALTH

- **FRANCE:** A peer reviewed study showed that severe obesity increases the risk of a COVID-19 patient needing invasive treatment, including mechanical ventilation in intensive care, no matter how old they are, what sex they are, or whether they have diabetes. The authors claim the pandemic has revealed the nature of obesity as a disease rather than simply a matter of body size, and it needs to be taken more seriously both in treatment and research.
- **CHINA:** China's strategies for the prevention and control of COVID-19 have increased confidence that future waves can be stopped or prevented. Containment and suppression are effective for preventing further deaths and infections, while mitigation prevents short-term socioeconomic damage.
- **GERMANY:** Six COVID-19 patient autopsies of people aged 58 – 83 showed that the cause of death was cardiorespiratory failure in the older patients (over 65), but younger patients died of intracranial haemorrhage or pulmonary embolism. Pronounced central nervous system (CNS) involvement with pan-encephalitis, meningitis, and brainstem neuronal cell damage were key events in all patients, with a CNS haemorrhage being a fatal COVID-19 complication in patients below 65.

TREATMENT AND VACCINATION

- **VENTILATORS:** There is a growing global demand for, and reduced availability of, ventilators – while manufacturers are working together to increase capacity, simply increasing the number of ventilators not enough. There is a shortage of trained staff skilled in the operation of mechanical ventilators (under normal circumstances, ventilator operators receive years of training). If used improperly, treatment can fail and staff can become infected. The authors call for the use of telemedicine to train new staff, and for manufacturers to produce a single operating manual.
- **CANAKINUMAB:** In a small group of Caucasian COVID-19 patients, the drug canakinumab was shown to be more effective in reducing COVID-19 severity when compared to a group of the same size treated with hydroxychloroquine/lopinavir-ritonavir. The drug was well tolerated with no severe side effects; all patients were clear of bacterial spots, had no abnormally low white blood cell counts, had no need for oxygen therapy after discharge, had improved oxygen saturation and had lowered levels of inflammation. The authors call for further research due to the small sample size.

MENTAL HEALTH

- **CHILDREN:** In this comment article, authors highlight that communication with children about life-threatening illness and death is complex and has a long-term effect on psychological wellbeing and family function. Research has shown that parents want guidance from healthcare professionals about how to talk to children about illness and death. In response to these observations, an online [COVID-19 communication support](#) platform to support professionals and families has been created.
- **ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION :** Of 53,328 adults in isolation with and without existing mental health conditions included in this preprint study, 24.4% of the sample had indications of moderate to severe anxiety, 31.4% indicated moderate to severe depressive symptoms. Mental health did not worsen during the study period, suggesting a process of adaptation, or that measures to safeguard jobs and

finances may have helped to settle specific anxieties. The lockdown itself may also have reduced worries about catching the virus. Adults with pre-existing mental health diagnoses had higher levels of anxiety and depression, but there was no evidence of widening inequalities in mental health experiences compared to people without existing mental illness.

3. Quick Summaries

[Autoimmune and inflammatory diseases following COVID-19](#)

- **AUTOIMMUNE DISEASE:** *Journal news article.* This article discusses different types of severe autoimmune diseases that have occurred in children and adults post COVID-19 infection. These diseases include Kawasaki-like disease in children and Guillain Barre syndrome in adults, both of which can be life-threatening.

[Quantifying additional COVID-19 symptoms will save lives](#)

- **SYMPTOM CRITERIA:** *Correspondence article.* Mass swabbing is inadequate in most countries. The authors emphasise the importance of using symptom criteria to encourage people to isolate. A study in Australia showed that adding 'loss of taste and smell' to criteria leads to identification of 16% of cases that would otherwise have been missed. Simple measures like this could have a huge impact on saving lives during the current pandemic.

4. Longer Reading

[The ABO blood group locus and a chromosome 3 gene cluster associate with SARS-CoV-2 respiratory failure in an Italian-Spanish genome-wide association analysis](#)

- **GENETICS:** *Preprint journal article.* By comparing DNA from patients with severe COVID-19 to that of healthy volunteers, researchers found that individuals with blood type A had 50% more chance of developing severe disease. Those with blood type O had the least chance of deteriorating to respiratory failure. This finding could be due to the fact that type O individuals have 'anti-A' antibodies, which have been suggested to block the adhesion of the SARS virus. As an implication of this study it may be advantageous to record blood type to detect patients at higher risk of severe disease.

[Admission of patients with STEMI since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. A survey by the European Society of Cardiology](#)

- **CARDIOLOGY:** *Peer-reviewed journal article.* This international survey of 3,101 cardiologists and nurses identified that 80% of respondents felt that since the outbreak of COVID-19, there had been a decrease in presentations of a serious type of heart attack, known as ST-elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI). The majority of those surveyed felt that this reduction was at least 40%. Survey participants also reported an increase in time taken for those with STEMI to reach the hospital. Modelling based on collected data identified full country lockdown, higher numbers of hospitalised COVID-19 patients, and total cardiology unit restructuring as independent predictors of perceived late STEMI presentation. Authors warn that authorities should provide information and reassurances for people to access appropriate medical care.