

COVID-19 Daily Briefing: May 15th 2020

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1. Summary

MEDICINE AND HEALTH

- **VACCINES:** Pre-print research demonstrates that the vaccine developed at Oxford University reduced the severity of clinical presentations and prevented lung pathology in monkeys subsequently infected with SARS-CoV-2.
- **HYPERTENSION DRUGS:** Previous reports raised concern that RAAS inhibitors, a type of widely used drug for hypertension (high blood pressure), may be associated with increased susceptibility to COVID-19. This clinical study, however, did not identify a significant difference in the risk of being hospitalised with COVID-19 for patients taking RAAS inhibitors when compared to other hypertension drugs.
- **CHILDREN:** Although COVID-19 in children is generally milder than in adults, recent reports have identified a very small number of children with Kawasaki disease, a type of severe post-viral inflammation which may be associated with recent SARS-COV-2 infection. A high proportion of the children in this pre-print study were of sub-Saharan African and Caribbean descent, a finding consistent with other studies of Kawasaki disease in children.
- **COMORBIDITIES:** A meta-analysis pre-print conducted on published COVID-19 studies of over 60,000 patients showed that cancer patients had a 2x higher risk of mortality than the general population. Those with congestive heart disease, coronary heart failure and hypertension had 2.5x, 2.4x and 2x times higher risk of mortality than those without these conditions respectively.

SOCIETY AND ACADEMIA

- **WOMEN IN ACADEMIA:** The proportion of women in academia publishing papers compared to this time last year is down 23%. The authors suggest that this decrease could be due to women being responsible for higher proportions of childcare and domestic work when in a dual-career couple and are therefore more greatly impacted by the pandemic. This may further increase the gender gap in academic medical publishing.

2. Key Questions

- **What is the government's analysis of the risks of the emergence of a Kawaski-like disease in children who may have been exposed to SARS-CoV-2?**
- Given this pandemic could last for the foreseeable future, what long-term plans does the government have to protect those particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 while maintaining a good quality of life for them?
- How is the government preparing for or trying to prevent the expected surge in cancer cases post-crisis?

3. Quick Summaries

[Not all world leaders use Twitter in response to the COVID-19 pandemic: impact of the way of Angela Merkel on psychological distress, behaviour and risk perception](#)

- **COMMUNICATION:** *Journal article.* These authors examine how the level of anxiety and depression decreased in the German population after the Chancellor's recent speech, showing traditional methods for providing information (outside of social media) can be effective.

[Cancer Patient Care during COVID-19](#)

- **CANCER:** *Journal article.* These authors examine the effects of the current pandemic on cancer treatment and diagnosis. Family physicians report delays in tests and a reluctance to refer to secondary care, meaning diagnosis of cancer is being delayed. Telemedicine is providing a temporary solution for maintaining cancer management, but health care providers should prepare for a surge in cancer cases after the crisis.

[Emergency ambulance services for heart attack and stroke during UK's COVID-19 lockdown](#)

- **STROKE AND HEART ATTACK:** *Correspondence article.* These authors address anecdotal reports of a reduction in stroke and heart attack hospital admissions since the lockdown began. The authors find no evidence to support these claims in data on callouts of the West Midlands ambulance service.

[COVID-19 response in the Middle East and north Africa: challenges and paths forward](#)

- **MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA (MENA):** *Comment article.* These authors consider the problems the pandemic will lead to in MENA, due to high levels of poverty and conflict. They conclude that these countries will need over \$240 million to combat the pandemic, of which they have only received \$73 million to date.

4. Longer Reading

[Kawasaki-like disease: emerging complication during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

- **KAWASAKI-LIKE DISEASE IN CHILDREN:** *Comment article.* Children under 18 years old are currently underrepresented in the diagnosed cases of COVID-19 worldwide. It is currently unclear whether children are less susceptible to disease, or whether asymptomatic infection is more prevalent than in adults. Recently concerns were raised following an increased incidence of Kawasaki-like disease in Italy, predominantly in children who had been previously diagnosed with COVID-19. Similar reports have arisen in countries highly affected by COVID-19. Reports are still rare, and most children are not severely affected by SARS-CoV-2 infection.

[ChAdOx1 nCoV-19 vaccination prevents SARS-COV-2 pneumonia in rhesus macaques](#)

- **VACCINE:** *Pre-print journal article.* In this work, rhesus macaques – a species of monkey frequently used in clinical research – were vaccinated with one dose of ChAdOx1 nCoV-19. Vaccinated monkeys were infected with SARS-CoV-2 28 days later. The vaccinated monkeys, but not control monkeys, remained free of viral pneumonia, but their immune systems did not eliminate the virus and it is unclear if the vaccine can block transmission. *This was a small trial and more data are required before a clear conclusion can be drawn.*