



CORONAVIRUS NEWS BRIEF

Compiled Periodically from various sources By:

Kaushik Amin, USA.

201-936-4927 * kaushikamin@hotmail.com

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The US President Joe Biden marked a year since the beginning of the coronavirus "shutdown" with a prime-time speech Thursday night where he announced all adult Americans should be eligible to get vaccinated by May 1, 2021.

Key takeaways from Biden's 1st prime-time address to the nation



President Joe Biden signs the American Rescue Plan, a package of economic relief measures to respond to the impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic, inside the Oval Office at the White House, March 11, 2021.

President Joe Biden marked a year since the beginning of the coronavirus "shutdown" with a prime-time speech Thursday night where he announced all adult Americans should be eligible to get vaccinated by May 1. He also predicted a possible return to some semblance of normalcy by the Fourth of July, and detailed several more measures aimed at speeding up vaccinations across the country.

It was the first prime-time address of his presidency, delivered from the White House's East Room and came the same day he signed a \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief package into law, a major legislative victory for him and Democrats on Capitol Hill.

In his remarks, Biden announced he will direct "states, tribes and territories to make all adults eligible for the vaccine no later than May 1." "That doesn't mean everyone will get a shot immediately, but May 1 is the day every adult will be eligible to sign up to get the first shot," the official said, adding that -- as Biden has said -- the administration only expects to actually have enough doses for all adults by the end of May. While the federal government procures and distributes vaccine doses, states and other non-federal jurisdictions control eligibility for that

supply. While many have largely followed federal guidance for the order in which to vaccinate different groups, there is still a patchwork of different eligibility guidelines that restrict who can receive it.

The president also told Americans that if we all do our part, there's a good chance that families, friends, neighbors will be able to gather in small groups to celebrate Independence Day on July Fourth. Biden said he expects small gatherings, like backyard barbecues, could potentially be OK if Americans follow guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention -- wearing a mask, socially distancing and getting a vaccine when it's your turn. "He's going to be very clear that this is not an automatic thing, that actually people have to continue to do what we all know that we need to do as Americans to get to that point," an official said.

Ahead of Independence Day, the CDC plans to provide more guidance to Americans about traveling, small gatherings, going to work and houses of worship, an official said. Biden announced the military will deploy 4,000 more active-duty service members "to support accination efforts," with 6,000 total troops backing vaccination programs.

More Than 100M Covid19 Vaccines Administered in US.

Stephanie Armour, Sabrina Siddiqui, Talal Ansari. The Wall Street Journal.



President Biden's direction to states to make all adults eligible for coronavirus vaccines by May 1 will pressure governors and local officials to increase the pace of their rollouts, as the U.S. surpassed 100 million vaccinations on Friday. The milestone comes as the inoculation drive gains pace in the U.S. and as new cases of Covid-19 have dropped in recent weeks. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's data-tracker website showed Friday that some 101 million doses of the three vaccines approved for use in the U.S. have been administered so far.

Mr. Biden's plan is the strongest sign yet that the Biden administration is confident that the current scarcity of shots will ease in the coming weeks. But getting the U.S. to the stage where most individuals will be able to gather in small groups by July 4, a goal championed Thursday by Mr. Biden, will face challenges.

The U.S. must find enough health workers to give out the shots and create more mass vaccination sites. Officials must work to ensure underserved communities receive the vaccine and hesitancy to take the vaccines is overcome. States will have to step up to the task even though some are still struggling with crashing appointment websites. "We will have to dramatically increase our capacity, because we are not at that capacity now," New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said during a press conference on Friday about reaching the May 1 goal.

For Mr. Biden, there is a political risk that the public will view the May 1 goal as an expectation they will get the vaccine by then—rather than merely being eligible by then—as vaccinations are likely to continue throughout the summer.

"The vaccine won't be in people's arms May 1, but it will be available," said Michael Osterholm, a University of Minnesota disease specialist who advised the Biden transition team on Covid-19.

"One of my biggest fears is having enough vaccines but not having people who will take it."

The administration can legally compel states to make all adults eligible by a given date because the vaccines were approved by the Food and Drug Administration under an emergency use authorization that allows the agency to release treatments in a declared emergency, said Nicholas Bagley, a University of Michigan law professor. Because of the authorization, the Biden administration has wide discretion to establish conditions governing who should get the vaccines, he said.

"The administration has the authority to be more prescriptive if it would like," Mr. Bagley said. In recent days, the U.S. has been administering over 2 million doses a day. The shot made by Pfizer Inc. and BioNTech SE has been administered most frequently in the U.S., with over 50.9 million doses given so far, according to data from the CDC, while Moderna Inc.'s vaccine has been given over 49.1

million times. The single-dose shot made by Johnson & Johnson has been administered over 870,000 times.

Mr. Biden announced plans this week to secure an additional 100 million doses of the J&J vaccine, doubling the company's commitment. The administration has contracts with Pfizer and Moderna to provide 600 million doses of their two-shot vaccines.

The White House said Friday it would expand the number of people qualified to administer vaccines across the country. Newly eligible vaccinators will include dentists, veterinarians, emergency medical technicians and students in professional healthcare fields, among other personnel.

The Biden administration also said it would make the vaccine available at more than 20,000 pharmacies across the country as part of its federal pharmacy program, and more than double the number of federally-supported mass vaccination sites. The administration will also launch a new website and a call center to help the public better locate where vaccine supply is available.

Mr. Biden has moved quickly to allocate funding from a \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package, which was passed by Democrats on a party-line vote and signed into law by the president on Thursday. That legislation provides \$7.5 billion for vaccine distribution, \$48 billion for testing and contact-tracing efforts and more than \$160 billion for schools and universities. The White House said the Department of Health and Human Services would immediately dedicate \$650 million toward expanding testing for teachers, staff and students in K-8 schools to help them reopen.

"This law is not the end of our efforts, though. In my view, it's just the beginning," Mr. Biden said Friday at a White House ceremony with congressional leaders to celebrate the relief bill.

The administration has steadily increased weekly shipments to states amid overwhelming demand. The White House said the weekly doses going out to states, tribes, territories and pharmacies is now at more than 20 million.

"Supply is the main issue right now," said Ajay Sethi, an associate professor and epidemiologist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, who said states can open eligibility to the next priority groups as supplies increase, eventually including everybody. "In Wisconsin, vaccinators are operating well below their capacity and continue to receive far fewer doses than requested."

The different eligibility rules have caused some confusion, and allowed others to game the system. Right now, with various priority rankings, many states have struggled to verify if people are eligible. This week New Yorkers aged 60 and older became eligible for vaccinations, while in neighboring New Jersey, residents 65 and older are eligible. Over in Connecticut, the lowest age has been set to 55.

Alaska has already made vaccines available to all adults. And Michigan said Friday that all residents aged 16 and up will be eligible for the vaccine beginning April 5, although health officials noted it may take several weeks for everyone who wants a vaccine to get an appointment. The Biden administration said it would establish a federally supported mass vaccination site in Detroit capable of administering 6,000 shots a day.

A number of state leaders, including Georgia Republican Gov. Brian Kemp and Connecticut Democratic Gov. Ned Lamont, said this week that they support the May 1 eligibility change.

The increase in vaccine quantity will so improve the current situation that it shouldn't make it harder for high-risk people to get the shots if they are competing against the broad public on or after May 1, said Leana Wen, a health policy professor at George Washington University.

"The Biden administration must be very confident in the supply chain and ability to ramp up distribution," she said.

The administration also said mobile units will be deployed to help get the vaccine to people in rural or other medically underserved areas.

States weren't briefed in advance before Mr. Biden announced plans to open eligibility by May 1, said Marcus Plescia, chief medical officer at the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, which represents public health agencies. He said there is a risk that opening up vaccines to all adults could overwhelm the system and make it harder to help underserved communities get doses.

"We probably are going to see some inequity," he said. "First come, first serve is not a good recipe for equity."

With vaccine supply on the upswing, some public-health leaders said the biggest concern is getting enough people to get the vaccine so the U.S. can achieve herd immunity by the fall.

"Biden set a clear goal and that's really reassuring," Ms. Wen said. "My biggest concern is we're not going to reach herd immunity by the fall because of complacency."

Dr. Fauci says CDC will soon change coronavirus guidelines again for vaccinated people.



Nearly 99 million coronavirus vaccine doses have been administered in the US, covering more than 19.2% of the population. Since mid-December, more than 64 million people have been given at least one dose. Among them, nearly 34 million people have gotten the complete two-shot regimen, or the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Those figures are impressive, but they're not enough for the country to reach herd immunity. Public health experts like Dr. Anthony Fauci have often said that a huge percentage of the population will have to be vaccinated for the US to return to normal.

An increasing number of studies in recent weeks have shown that the current vaccines are highly effective at preventing COVID-19 complications and death. Brand new research has also indicated that the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine can significantly reduce asymptomatic infections in real-world conditions. The drug might effectively stop the spread, in addition to preventing severe illness. Despite that progress though, health officials are still advising against the lifting of COVID-19 safety measures.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has already updated its COVID-19 guidelines with new information for fully vaccinated people, explaining the kind of scenarios where people can gather with others without wearing masks. The agency is still advising people not to travel even if they're fully vaccinated. Moreover, the CDC says that everyone still needs to wear face masks in public settings. But it looks like another guideline update is coming soon to cover additional activities that could be safe for fully vaccinated people, according to Dr. Fauci.

The number of daily new COVID-19 cases has dropped dramatically since early January, but it is currently plateauing between 60,000 and 70,000 cases per day. CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky explained that the agency was still evaluating risks a few days ago, which is why the previous guideline update was delayed. "These are complex issues, and the science is rapidly evolving," Walensky said. "CDC is working to ensure that the communications we release on this guidance are clear. We are making sure, and taking the time, to get this right." She warned at the time that the coronavirus figures are "still too high" and that they "have now plateaued for more than a week at levels we saw during the late summer surge." Walensky cautioned people against relaxing precautions. Several states have lifted mask-mandates in recent days though, and some states even allow full-capacity dining in restaurants.

A person is considered fully vaccinated two weeks after receiving a second dose or two weeks after the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine. The CDC's updated guidelines say people can meet indoors without face masks in limited groups. Face masks and social distancing are still required in public settings or when gathering with unvaccinated people from more than one household. Vaccinated people can still be infected since vaccines do not offer 100% efficacy. The guidelines say people who suspect an infection should seek a PCR test, contact their doctors, and isolate themselves from others. The CDC still says that travel can increase the risk of COVID-19 transmission, which is why the recent guidelines update advises people to avoid travel and stay home at this time.

Fauci addressed the guidelines on Thursday in an interview with MSNBC's Rachel Maddow, revealing that a series of updates will follow. The next one is due in a few days. The new documentation will define additional best practices for Americans who have received one or two vaccine doses.

The new announcements "will address travel, they will address workplaces, they will address houses of worship," the health expert said. "You're gonna see that coming out pretty quickly."

Fauci did not offer explicit scenarios where the new guidelines will apply, but his remarks are in line with President Biden's comments on Thursday. "In

the coming weeks, we will issue further guidance on what you can and cannot do once fully vaccinated to lessen the confusion, to keep people safe, and encourage more people to get vaccinated," Biden said. "That doesn't mean large events with lots of people together, but it does mean small groups will be able to get together."

Both Biden and Fauci have warned that lifting restrictions before enough people are vaccinated is dangerous, as the number of cases can rise again quickly. Biden also said that the administration is looking to open vaccine eligibility to all adults by May 1st.

Stimulus checks are already out the door

The Internal Revenue Service said late Friday that the \$1,400 stimulus checks included in the American Rescue Plan will make their way to individuals' bank accounts "as early as this weekend," with more coming this week. Indeed, The Wall Street Journal reports that thousands of people had already received their payments by Friday evening, just a day after President Biden signed the \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill into law. Those who are still

waiting can begin tracking the status of their direct payments on Monday via the "Get My Payment" tool on the IRS's website.

Eligibility is determined by an individual's 2019 or 2020 tax return, whichever is the most recently processed. Anyone earning \$75,000 per year or less qualifies. For couples, the cap is a yearly income of \$150,000. Households will get \$1,400 for each adult, child, and adult dependent.

Millions of AstraZeneca doses lying idle in the US



Tens of millions of doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine is lying idle in facilities in the US amidst a shortage of jabs elsewhere, the New York Times reports.

First, you need to know:

The US has authorised three vaccines to date: Pfizer-BioNTech's, Moderna's and lately a single-dose vaccine by Johnson & Johnson.

It has administered over 95 million doses of those vaccines, covering 18% of the population with at least one dose and nearly 10% fully vaccinated.

President Joe Biden has said the US will vaccinate every adult by May 01.

AstraZeneca has not yet applied for an emergency use authorisation in the US as it's awaiting the results from a large trial there. But the US had pledged about \$1.2 billion to secure its doses last year. Those doses are now lying idle. About 30 million doses are currently bottled at its facility in West Chester, Ohio

Tens of millions more doses have also been made by Maryland-based Emergent BioSolutions under an agreement with AstraZeneca.

Experts are now calling on the US to release these doses for exports. Note: The WHO on Friday said there is no reason to halt the use of AstraZeneca shots after a few European nations did so out of caution following reports of blood clots.

Meanwhile, the Quad group of nations decided to set up expert level working groups on vaccines, critical and emerging technologies and climate change during the first-ever meeting of the heads of state of the nations. India will also manufacture vaccine doses under the initiative.

Canadian Bishops Issue Clarification on Notice Regarding AstraZeneca & Johnson & Johnson Vaccines.



The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCC) clarified on March 11 regarding an earlier notice they sent to Catholics, recommending the choice of alternatives over the AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson COVID19 vaccines due to their use of “abortion-derived cell lines in their development, production, & confirmatory testing.”

“This Note was published in response to questions from Catholics who were concerned about the moral permissibility of receiving currently-approved COVID-19 vaccines,” wrote the national assembly of the bishops, in their clarification of a notice (pdf) they sent on Tuesday. “The Note did not refer to, nor intend to question the medical efficacy of any vaccine.” “Catholics are invited to be vaccinated, both in keeping with the dictates of their conscience and in contributing to the common good by promoting the health and safety of others,” the clarification read.

The CCCC said that they were merely restating the position outlined by the Holy See on the use of COVID19 vaccines back in December 2020. The Holy See is the sovereign entity governing the Catholic Church, which officially recognized the CCCC in 1948 after it was founded in 1943. The Holy See has stated that in situations where cells from aborted fetuses are used to create cell lines for use in scientific research, “there exist differing degrees of responsibility’ of cooperation in evil.” It cited the example of organizations who decided to use cell lines of illicit origin versus those who didn’t have a voice in making the decision. The Holy See said that “when ethically irreproachable COVID-19 vaccines are not available ... it is morally acceptable to receive Covid-19 vaccines that have used cell lines from aborted fetuses in their research and production process,” a guidance that was echoed by the CCCC in their earlier notice.

In the notice, the CCCC told Catholics that the approved Moderna and Pfizer vaccines, though

they had used unethically-derived cell lines in some of their final testing processes, they did not use the abortion-derived cell lines in their development and production, and so it is deemed as morally acceptable to receive the vaccines “since the connection to abortion is extremely remote.”

But for AstraZeneca’s and Johnson & Johnson’s COVID-19 vaccines, the CCCC argued that the two organizations had used the abortion-derived cell lines during the stages of development, production, and testing. If given a choice, the CCCC recommended Catholics choose the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine over the ones from AstraZeneca or Johnson & Johnson.

In a statement to the CBC, AstraZeneca spokesperson Carlo Mastrangelo said the COVID-19 vaccine is produced using a biological manufacturing process that utilizes a common human cell, HEK293, which the Oxford University has chosen due to its ease of use, growth, and maintenance.

“The cell line was originally derived from fetal human embryonic kidney cells from 1973 and has been maintained in cell banks across the world ever since to help researchers develop new medical treatments,” Mastrangelo said. “HEK293 cell lines are grown in a laboratory, generating copies from the original cells, and are not the same as fetal tissue. Several current human cell lines are thousands of generations removed from the original fetal tissue. No additional fetal tissue has been added to the cell line since its creation.”

He added that only if developers are “in full compliance with ethical guidelines” can the human-derived cell lines be used.

In their clarification on Thursday, the CCCC said Catholics may receive all the COVID-19 vaccines approved in Canada.

“Since there is currently no choice of vaccine being offered, Catholics in good conscience, may receive the vaccine that is available and offered to them,” the clarification read.

But “the use of such vaccines does not constitute formal cooperation with abortion,” the notice on Tuesday concluded.

Coronavirus: News from around the Globe.

***White House to unveil new global vaccine initiative aimed at manufacturing 1 billion doses by 2022**



Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison, right, and Minister for Foreign Affairs Marise Payne, left, participate in the inaugural Quad leaders meeting with the President of the United States Joe Biden, the Prime Minister of Japan Yoshihide Suga and the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi in a virtual meeting in Sydney, Saturday, March 13, 2021. Morrison said his first-ever meeting with President Joe Biden as well as the leaders of India and Japan will become an anchor of stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

The White House announced a new global vaccine initiative Friday – aimed at expanding manufacturing capacity in India for up to 1 billion new doses for developing countries by 2022. The U.S. and Japan will help finance the increased manufacturing work at Biological E Ltd., an Indian pharmaceutical company, and work with Australia to strengthen “last-mile” vaccination, according to a White House fact sheet released Friday.

The administration touted the effort ahead of a virtual summit Friday morning between President Joe Biden and the leaders of Japan, India and Australia.

An administration official also said that Biden will host Japan's prime minister at the White House – his first in-person meeting with a foreign leader – as his administration seeks to shore up U.S. alliances in Asia and counter China's global ambitions. No date has been set yet for the meeting with Yoshihide Suga.

On Friday, Biden met virtually with Suga, as well as the prime ministers of India and Australia, to discuss China, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and

other shared concerns. Biden opened the session from the White House's State Dining Room, with the other leaders, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Japan's Suga, appearing on large flat-screen televisions.

The so-called “Quad” is seen as a strategic alliance to counter Beijing's economic and military expansionism. All four countries have had tense relations with Beijing recently on a range of issues. Friday's session was closed to reporters, except for a few minutes of opening remarks.

“We've got a big agenda ahead of us ... but I'm optimistic about our prospects,” Biden said according to a pool report.

In a joint statement released after Friday's meeting, the four leaders vowed to work together on the economic and health impacts of COVID-19, climate change, cybersecurity, counterterrorism and other matters. They also took a veiled swipe at Beijing as it has cracked down on democratic freedoms in Hong Kong and detained at least 1 million Uyghurs in prison and labor camps.

“We strive for a region that is free, open, inclusive, healthy, anchored by democratic values, and unconstrained by coercion,” the joint statement said. The vaccine announcement comes as the Biden administration faces growing pressure to dip into America's vaccine supply, with global health experts noting the U.S. has purchased far more than it needs to inoculate the US population. Biden has said the US will share its vaccine supply with other countries once all Americans have been vaccinated.

In the meantime, Beijing has ramped up its vaccine diplomacy, racing to provide Chinese-made vaccines to low-income countries. China has pledged roughly half a billion doses to more than 45 countries. Biden and his advisers have cast China as the biggest geopolitical threat to the US, arguing Beijing is seeking to promote its repressive, authoritarian system on the rest of the world.

“China is the only country with the economic, diplomatic, military and technological power to seriously challenge the stable and open international system – all the values and relationships that make the world work the way we want it to,” Secretary of

State Antony Blinken said in a recent speech outlining Biden's foreign policy priorities.

*** Dentists, veterinarians and med students authorized to administer Covid shots as Biden expands vaccine program.**

The Biden administration will allow a wider array of medical workers, including dentists, veterinarians, EMTs and medical students, to begin administering Covid-19 vaccines.

HHS is using its authority under the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act to authorize the measure.

The move comes after President Joe Biden announced Thursday that he will push every state to make all adults eligible for vaccines by May 1.

The Biden administration will allow a wider array of medical workers, including dentists, veterinarians, EMTs and medical students, to begin administering Covid-19 shots as part of its "war-time" effort to get the nation closer to normal by mid-summer.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is using its authority under the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act to authorize more medical professionals and qualified students to administer the shots, the agency said in a statement Friday.

That means dentists, EMTs, midwives, optometrists, paramedics, physician assistants, podiatrists, respiratory therapists and veterinarians can begin administering Covid-19 vaccines nationwide, according to HHS.

It also authorizes "medical students, nursing students, and other health care students in the professions listed under the PREP Act with proper training and professional supervision to serve as vaccinators," the statement said.

The move comes after President Joe Biden announced Thursday evening that he will direct all U.S. states, tribes and territories to make all adults, ages 18 and up, eligible for the coronavirus vaccines by May 1.

The president, during his first primetime event to the nation on the one-year anniversary of the pandemic, said the aim is for Americans to be able to gather in small, in person groups to celebrate the Fourth of July. "That does not mean that everyone will get a shot immediately, but May 1 is the date every adult will be eligible to sign up to get the shot," Biden's Covid czar Jeff Zients said at a press briefing on Friday. "By the end of May, we expect to have enough vaccine supply for all adults in this country."

The U.S. is now administering a weekly average of 2.2 million vaccines per day. Roughly 65% of Americans age 65 and older are now inoculated, Zients said. Just over a quarter of adults age 18 and older have now been given at least one shot of vaccine, according to the latest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"We're making progress, but there's more work to do," he said.

On Monday, the CDC released its first set of guidance for people who are fully vaccinated, which says they can now mingle with other vaccinated people inside without masks or social distancing.

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*** WHO says it's investigating reports of blood clots in people who got AstraZeneca Covid vaccine.**



Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO) speaks after Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases during the 148th session of the Executive Board on the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak in Geneva, Switzerland, January 21, 2021.

The WHO is investigating reports of blood clots in some people who received the AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine. At least nine countries have now suspended their use of the vaccine over safety concerns.

AstraZeneca said in a statement Friday that there's "no evidence" that the vaccine causes an increased risk of developing blood clots.

The World Health Organization said Friday it is reviewing recent reports of blood clots in some people who received the AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine that have prompted a few countries to halt their rollout of the shots.

At least nine countries, including Denmark, Norway, Iceland and Thailand, have suspended their use of the vaccine over safety concerns. As of Wednesday, around 5 million people in Europe had received the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine. Of this figure, 30 so-

called thromboembolic events have been reported in recipients. Those are blood clots that form in blood vessels and block blood flow.

AstraZeneca said in a statement Friday that there's "no evidence" that the vaccine causes an increased risk of developing blood clots.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said Friday that the agency's Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety "systematically reviews safety signals and is carefully assessing the current reports on the AstraZeneca vaccine."

"As soon as WHO has gained the full understanding of these events," he added, "the findings and any changes to our current recommendations will be communicated immediately to the public."

Dr. Mariangela Simao, WHO assistant director-general for access to medicines and health products, added that the global health agency will "probably have a statement on this next week as investigations are completed."

"WHO is very much aligned with the position that we should continue immunization until we have clarified the causal relationship," she said.

Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, WHO's chief scientist, said it remains unclear if the vaccine is actually causing the blood clots. An AstraZeneca spokesperson noted that "the observed number of these types of events are significantly lower in those vaccinated than what would be expected among the general population."

"The adverse events which are reported after vaccination have to be seen in the context of events which occur naturally in the population,"

Swaminathan said. "Just because it's reported following a vaccination doesn't mean that it's because of the vaccination. It could be completely unrelated."

Europe's drug regulator, the European Medicines Agency, has stressed that there is no indication the AstraZeneca shot is causing blood clots, adding it believes the vaccine's benefits "continue to outweigh its risks."

"Reports of blood clots received so far are not greater than the number that would have occurred naturally in the vaccinated population," said Dr. Phil Bryan, vaccines safety lead at Britain's Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency.

"The safety of the public will always come first. We are keeping this issue under close review but available evidence does not confirm that the vaccine

is the cause. People should still go and get their COVID-19 vaccine when asked to do so," he added.

*** Novavax Reports Its COVID-19 Vaccine is 96% Efficacious, Based on Phase 3 Trial Results**



Novavax revealed the final results of its Phase 3 human trials of NVX-CoV2373 in a press release; the findings have not been submitted for peer-review in a scientific journal yet. The company reported that overall, its vaccine was 96% efficacious in protecting people from mild, moderate or severe COVID-19 disease if they were infected with the original SARS-CoV-2 virus. The vaccine was slightly less efficacious, at 86%, in protecting against disease if people were infected with the B.1.1.7 strain of the virus, which is becoming dominant in the U.K., where the study was conducted. That gives the vaccine an overall efficacy of 89.7% against both the original and U.K. variants. By comparison, Pfizer-BioNTech's vaccine is 95% efficacious against COVID-19 disease, Moderna's is 94%, and Johnson & Johnson's is 66%.

In an ongoing, Phase 2B study of the vaccine in South Africa, where a more worrisome variant is increasingly responsible for a growing share of new infections, Novavax's shot is so far 55% efficacious in protecting against COVID-19 symptoms.

"I did not think it was possible to have a vaccine prevent 96% of any respiratory disease," says Dr. Gregory Glenn, president of research and development at Novavax. "That's outstanding, and I'm personally ecstatic. If you had asked me a year ago [to predict] the very best vaccine we could expect, I would have said 80% or 85% efficacy against any respiratory disease would be pretty amazing."

Glenn joined the company just over a decade ago because he was intrigued by its vaccine strategy. In the case of COVID-19, that entails inserting the gene for a SARS-CoV-2 protein into an insect virus, and then infecting cells from an armyworm, the larval stage of a type of moth that infects cabbages, with this modified virus; those cells then act like a living

copying machine, pumping out copies of the SARS-CoV-2 protein. That protein is then suspended in a molecular bubble, and injected into the body, where human immune cells recognize it as foreign and mount defenses against it. “It’s a beautiful system for making this [SARS-CoV-2] protein,” says Glenn. “It has to be made with absolute fidelity, especially for a viral respiratory disease, or it doesn’t work. And today we are announcing validation of that system.”

The strategy is designed to mimic as closely as possible the way viruses would activate the immune system during natural infection, that’s a potential advantage since such a response is, in theory, the one that is broadest and most complete—and likely, that provides the most protection. The company has used the technology in a flu vaccine, but some of the steps, including extracting the SARS-CoV-2 protein from the armyworm cells, were developed specifically for the COVID-19 vaccine.

Novavax’s Phase 3 trial included more than 15,000 people in the U.K. ranging in age from 18 to 84 years old, half of whom were randomly assigned to get the vaccine, which is given in two doses, and half of whom received placebos. Only five cases of severe COVID-19 were reported in the study, all among those getting the placebo.

While encouraged by the results, Glenn says his team, like those at the other vaccine manufacturers, is studying whether a booster dose might be needed to sustain the level of protection the study found. “Vaccine immunity doesn’t last forever,” he says. “I think the immune response is going to fall off after six to 12 months, and we’re going to need to boost.” Novavax is also studying a so-called bivalent vaccine, one targeted against both the original SARS-CoV-2 and the more worrisome South African variant. Boosting with this vaccine, Glenn says, would provide the broadest protection. Glenn wouldn’t specify how much of a stockpile of doses the company has already manufactured, but says Novavax is in discussions with both U.K. and U.S. regulators about next steps to prepare for possible authorization. The company hopes to file for emergency use authorization in the U.S. during the next quarter, in the meanwhile, start to increase production with manufacturing partners in India, Spain, U.K., Korea and Japan.

Novavax’s vaccine can be stored at refrigerated temperatures, which could make it attractive for more vaccination sites that don’t have the freezer capabilities that the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna

vaccines require. The company has committed to providing 1.1 billion doses of its vaccine to the global COVAX enterprise, run jointly by the World Health Organization, GAVI and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations.

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*** No reason to stop use of AstraZeneca Covid vax: WHO**



As several European countries temporarily suspended the rollout of AstraZeneca’s Covid-19 vaccine over fears of blood clots, the World Health Organization (WHO) on Friday backed the vaccine saying there is no reason to stop using it.

“AstraZeneca is an excellent vaccine, as are the other vaccines that are being used,” Margaret Harris, a WHO communications officer, told reporters at a briefing in Geneva.

“We’ve reviewed the data on deaths. There has been no death, to date, proven to have been caused by vaccination,” she said.

The health authorities in Denmark on Thursday said that they are temporarily suspending the use of AstraZeneca’s Covid-19 vaccine as a precautionary measure after some patients developed blood clots since receiving the jab, including one who died, digital news publisher The Local reported. Apart from Denmark, Norway and Iceland have also temporarily suspended the use of AstraZeneca’s Covid-19 vaccine. The Danish decision came days after Austria suspended use of a particular batch of the drug because a woman died 10 days after taking it. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Luxembourg have also stopped using the batch, the BBC reported.

The move comes “following reports of serious cases of blood clots among people vaccinated with AstraZeneca’s Covid-19 vaccine”, the Danish Health Authority said in a statement. But

it cautiously added that “it has not been determined, at the time being, that there is a link between the vaccine and the blood clots”.

*** It's vaccine equity vs intellectual property**



India, the US, Japan and Australia are working out a plan that would enable India to manufacture Johnson & Johnson's Covid-19 shot, which would then be distributed to the Pacific and Southeast Asian nations. Such multilateral initiatives are the need of the hour since low- and middle-income countries are struggling to get access to the jabs.

India and its wealthier allies are not always on the same page on vaccine equity. At the World Trade Organization, the US, Japan, the UK and the like oppose a proposal by India and South Africa for a temporary waiver on intellectual property rights on drugs and vaccines related to Covid-19.

A waiver would enable companies in India, South Africa and others to make the vaccines and drugs developed by Western companies during the pandemic, without having to strike a separate license agreement.

Wealthy nations argue this would harm companies who have spent time and money to fight the pandemic.

But critics say most of the vaccine research was funded by taxpayers. Moderna's research, for instance, was financed by the US government's Warp Speed program.

There is a scientific justification in allowing more countries to make vaccines.

At the current rate, poor countries may not be vaccinated against Covid-19 until 2023 or 2024.

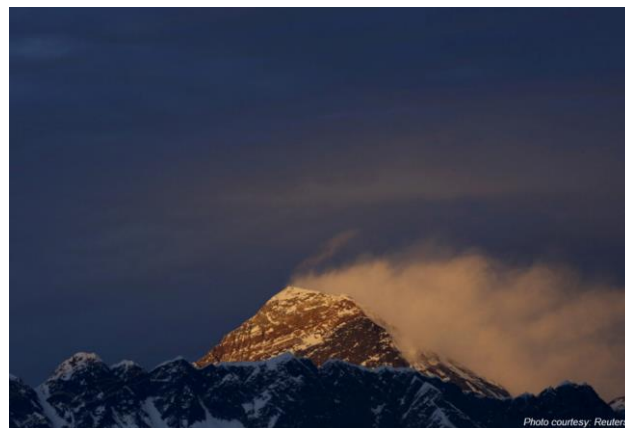
The virus would circulate in these parts of the world in the meantime, mutating along the way and possibly creating more dangerous variants.

Thus a global vaccination is necessary to end the pandemic, experts say.

But to gain the moral high-ground, India has to lead by example and wave off the intellectual property rights for Covaxin, which was developed by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with state-funded ICMR.

*

***Mt Everest to reopen next month to climbers.**



More than 300 foreign mountaineers are expected to try their skills in scaling the world's tallest mountain, Mt Everest, as the peak climbing season opens next month, according to a Nepal tourism department official Mira Acharya. This will not only be the first time since the coronavirus induced lockdown last year that Mt Everest will be thrown open but also the first time since its height was officially revised by 86 cm to 8,848.86 metres last year.

Given the spread of the pandemic — it has claimed over 3,000 lives so far in Nepal — the country has imposed strict conditions which climbers will need to adhere to. These include a minimum period of one week quarantine as also a "certificate showing the climber had tested negative for the virus".

Mountaineering teams are also adding their own precautions, such as including an expedition doctor and forming closed bubbles.

The rush of climbers may increase and could possibly beat the 2019 record of 381 mountaineers who attempted to scale the summit that year, mainly because the Chinese side of Mt Everest will still remain closed this season. That could lead to a much needed boost to Nepal's tourism earnings, considering that mountaineering expeditions net the country \$300 million annually.

***Delay 2nd dose for more efficacy: Experts.**

Public health experts, citing emerging evidence, have said that India could consider delaying the

second dose of the Covid vaccine to improve immunogenicity. Currently, the follow-up shot is being given 28 days later. Experts TOI spoke to said the country could look beyond that timeline.

Dr Gagandeep Kang, a member of Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE), which is advising the World Health Organization, said the decision to delay was not just about supply constraints, but improved efficacy too.

A recently published Lancet study said the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine — made in India by Serum Institute as Covishield — showed greater efficacy when its second dose was administered after a gap of 12 weeks, instead of four. The study was based on results from over 17,000 trial participants. The researchers found that efficacy of the shot had risen from an average of 55.1% (after two doses were given fewer than six weeks apart) to 81.3% when the interval was at least 12 weeks.

Dr Lalit Kant, former head of ICMR's Epidemiology and Communicable diseases division said models have shown a delayed second dose offers better protection, but real-world conditions can differ.

"Delayed doses can protect a higher number of people quickly when supplies are limited. But in India, we don't seem to have a shortage of vaccines. So, the benefit is in terms of improving the level of protection."

*

***All living ex-presidents but 1 get vaccinated in new COVID-19 PSA.**

Former President Donald Trump wants you to remember that the COVID-19 vaccines were developed while he was in office. But for whatever reasons, he did not join every other member of the most exclusive club he belongs to, ex-presidents, for the Ad Council's new COVID-19 vaccination public service announcement.

In the minute-long ad, former Presidents Barack Obama, George W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and Jimmy Carter all talk about what they are looking forward to doing when the COVID-19 pandemic is under control, and urge people to get vaccinated as soon as they are able, to bring us all to that end point. "It's up to you," Carter says. The ad shows photos of all four living ex-presidents and their wives getting inoculated.

Trump and former first lady Melania Trump did quietly get vaccinated before leaving the White House, Trump's office said March 1, but there are no public photos of the inoculation.

*

*** Why COVID19 deaths were reportedly nearly as likely in 5-star nursing homes as 1-star facilities?**



During the coronavirus pandemic, people living at five-star long-term care facilities in the United States were roughly as likely to die from a COVID-19 infection as those at one-star nursing homes, a New York Times investigation found. While the virus presents a high risk to older people regardless of their living situation, the Times investigation also revealed that the federal government's nursing home rating system is deeply flawed and susceptible to manipulation, perhaps helping pave the way for the national crisis-within-a-crisis that took route early on in the pandemic.

To evaluate the ratings' reliability, the Times built a database that analyzed "millions of payroll records to determine how much hands-on care nursing homes provided, combed through 373,000 reports by state inspectors, and examined financial statements submitted to the government by more than 10,000 nursing home." Additionally, the paper got access to ratings data that weren't publicly available from academics "who had research agreements with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services." The Times concluded that homes often pass the government incorrect information that makes them seem cleaner and safer than they are. They'll reportedly inflate staffing levels by including employees who are on vacation, understate the number of patients on dangerous antipsychotic medications, and leave accidents and health problems unreported. Per the Times, nursing homes that earned five stars for their self-reported data were nearly as likely to fail their in-person inspections as they were to "ace them," but the government reportedly rarely audits the nursing homes' data. All told, it created a situation in which nursing homes "were working to improve their ratings, but not their quality," Charlene Harrington, who sits on a board that advises C.M.S. told the Times, noting that they were therefore unprepared for the pandemic with a pass from the government.

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PRIOR APPOINTMENT REQUIRED

Corporate Office : Helping Hearts Foundation (A NJ 503 (c) Nonprofit Corporation)
6905, Hana Rd, Edison, NJ 08817

Inspired by : Pranshi | Mila | Karm | Devansh | Deeya | Dhilan | Dhyani | Shivans | Trisha

CONTACT PERSONS

Dr. Sunil Parikh
(732) 822-9787

Mukesh Patel
(973) 897 8667

Ajay Goswami
(732) 540-6411

Dr. Sparshil Patel
(732) 735-2258

Raj Rana
(201) 280-4228

PICKUP POINTS

Faith Home Healthcare
271 US Highway 46, Suite B-201,
Fairfield NJ 07004

DAS Pharmacy
110 Van Houten Ave,
Passaic NJ 07055

Durham Pharmacy
124 Durham Ave Unit #7,
South Plainfield NJ 07080

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Faith Home Healthcare | Das Pharmacy | Penn Pharmacy
SSAI | Circle of Life Medical | Adult Daycare of Bellville | Durham Pharmacy
Rana Samaj of USA | Indian Health Camp of New Jersey

COVID19: Weekly Update.

The numbers below are from
Saturday 03-13-2021 * 12pm US East coast Time..

Compiled Periodically By:

Kaushik Amin, USA.

201-936-4927/Kaushikamin@hotmail.com

Details are compiled from various sources.

Please note: There are many times likely false data & variations in data
most of the time, so, please use the data wisely.

Marked "" are not reliable data.*

.....

World:

119,855,035. Cases. / 2,655,064. Deaths.

Recovered till today:

96,426,753.

01. U.S. A.:

30,002,491. Cases. / 545,635. Deaths.

02. Brazil:

11,368,316. Cases. / 275,276. Deaths.

03. India*: (???)

11,358,643. Cases. / 158,642. Deaths.

05. UK:

4,253,820. Cases. / 125,464. Deaths.

22. Canada.

903,233. Cases. / 22,404. Deaths.

00. (India): Gujarat* : (???)

2077,397. (???) Cases. / 4,442. Deaths.

USA States:

01. California:

3,618,594. Cases. 55,455. Deaths

02. Texas*:

2,725,374. Cases. / 46,457. Deaths.

03. Florida:

1,967,865. Cases / 32,170. Deaths.

04. New York*.:

1,768,855. Cases / 49,021. Deaths.

05. Illinois:

1,206,172. Cases. / 23,163. Deaths.

06. Georgia:

1,031,713. Cases. / 18,164. Deaths.

07. Ohio:

986,740. Cases. / 17,871. Deaths.

08. Pennsylvania

969,119. Cases / 24,639. Deaths.

11. New Jersey*.:

830,848. Cases. / 23,854. Deaths.

15. Massachusetts:

598,859. Cases. / 16,580. Deaths.

34. Connecticut:

290,577. Cases / 7,765. Deaths.



COVID19: DOS AND DON'TS.

* Covid19 vaccines available now to cities nationwide. Find out how to get yours.

* Finally Vaccine has arrived in the US; and many parts of world, still it will be a long time to Wait for most of us. Yet post vaccination results/effects are not known to the research/medico community fully. We are still in a Pandemic Period, also possible invasion of new 4 or more strains of UK, Brazil, South Africa Coronavirus. Entering soon the summer, the number of cases are still on a higher side, yet to achieve the flat curve, world over most of us are just ignoring the pandemic do's & don'ts, particularly when we are with festivity mode in final days of 2020, so please take Extreme Care, Stay Safe & Stay Home. Yet not an easy time for every one!

* Corona is still around, & may remain lifelong! It's not as simple as viral flu. It's as dangerous as like a contest of survival of the fittest.

* Vaccine is available now, first to the frontline medico fraternity, patients in need, & nursing home/long term care facilities residents on a priority, but average person will have no easy access soon, so be careful & protect yourself & your loved ones for good. Mask, frequent hand wash with soap & social distancing only is the option for now* Must use Mask, even if you have taken Covid shots, Vaccine is just protection, it's not a cure! Also wear Gloves,

Sunglasses & the most important: keep safe distance, keep washing your hands frequently with soap or use reliable sanitizer either one at least for 30 seconds.

* In India nasal steam (Naas) is recommended by the Government authorities, Ayurvedic practitioners, & also is a traditional remedy, but the US CDC doesn't recommend it due to a probable risk to the brain.

* If you can, use Mouth Rinse, will help to boost your oral health.

* If you have young kids/minors attending the school or college, it's advised to put on the mask for everyone inside the home.

* We are passing through a tough time of Life & Death. Follow Social Distancing, but stay in for Social Contacts. If you know any one suffering with Corona, your nearer or dearer, call and talk to them frequently, we don't know whether they will return safely with us. Call other relatives/friends, at least ten persons a week. We are social & want to take care of those who are cut off due to Corona self-imposed lockdowns. Also keep busy yourself & family members with plenty of daily activities like yog, exercise & Stay Physically Fit, Pursue Your Hobby, Get Adequate, at least 6 to 8 hrs. Of Sleep, & Eat Healthy Balance Diet.

* Yet it's a long march to finish, no one knows when we will...!!!!

Take care, & Stay Safe.