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## COVID-19 Evidence Update

**Date 30<sup>th</sup> November – 6<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

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## **Guidelines**

### **[Advice for the use of atracurium in anaesthesia and intensive care](#)**

Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland (AAGBI). Royal College of Anaesthetists/Intensive Care Society/Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine; 2020.

<https://icmanaesthesiacovid-19.org/use-of-atracurium-in-anaesthesia-and-intensive-care>

[The second surge in cases of COVID-19 has created increased demand for the non-depolarising neuromuscular blocking drug atracurium, and this drug is now subject to a supply disruption alert.]

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**[COVID-19 vaccination programme.](#)**

Public Health England (PHE); 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/covid-19-vaccination-programme>

[Documents relating to the new coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination programme, including: COVID-19: vaccination programme guidance for healthcare practitioners, and COVID-19: the green book, chapter 14a.]

**[COVID-19 vaccination: women of childbearing age, currently pregnant, planning a pregnancy or breastfeeding.](#)**

Public Health England (PHE); 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-women-of-childbearing-age-currently-pregnant-planning-a-pregnancy-or-breastfeeding>

[Information for all women of childbearing age, those currently pregnant, planning a pregnancy or breastfeeding on coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination.]

**[COVID-19: guidance for commissioners and providers of services for people who use drugs or alcohol.](#)**

Public Health England (PHE); 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-commissioners-and-providers-of-services-for-people-who-use-drugs-or-alcohol>

[Guidance for commissioners and service providers for those dependent on drugs or alcohol. 2 December 2020: Updated guidance with information on local restrictions from 2 December.]

**[COVID-19: guidance for those leading a nomadic way of life.](#)**

Public Health England (PHE); 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-those-leading-a-nomadic-way-of-life>

[Information on coronavirus (COVID-19) for those leading a nomadic way of life. 2 December 2020: Updated guidance with information on local restrictions from 2 December.]

**[COVID-19: vaccination programme guidance for healthcare practitioners.](#)**

Public Health England (PHE); 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-programme-guidance-for-healthcare-practitioners>

[Guidance for healthcare practitioners about the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination programme.

4 December 2020: Update report: details on page 3.]

**[Managing capacity and demand within inpatient and community mental health, learning disabilities and autism services for all ages, version 2.](#)**

NHS England; 2020.

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/guidance-managing-capacity-and-demand-within-inpatient-and-community-mental-health-learning-disabilities-and-autism-services-for-all-ages/>

[This document provides information and guidance for providers and their clinical and non-clinical teams who are planning for how best to manage their capacity across inpatient and community services, and should support contingency planning, already underway, for a range of resource constrained scenarios. Updated 17 November 2020.]

*Freely available online*

### **Mask use in the context of COVID-19.**

World Health Organization (WHO); 2020.

[https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-\(2019-ncov\)-outbreak](https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-(2019-ncov)-outbreak)

[This document provides updated guidance on mask use in health care and community settings, and during home care for COVID-19 cases. It is intended for policy makers, public health and infection prevention and control professionals, health care managers and health workers. Updated 1 December 2020.]

### **Supported living services during coronavirus (COVID-19).**

Public Health England (PHE); 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supported-living-services-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

[Guidance for providers of supported living settings. 1 December 2020: Added easy read version of the guidance.]

### **Tier 1: Medium alert.**

Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC); 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tier-1-medium-alert>

[What you can and cannot do in an area in Tier 1 of local restrictions from 2 December.]

*Freely available online*

### **Tier 2: High alert.**

Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC); 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tier-2-high-alert>

[What you can and cannot do in an area in Tier 2 of local restrictions from 2 December.]

*Freely available online*

### **Tier 3: Very High alert.**

Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC); 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tier-3-very-high-alert>

[What you can and cannot do in an area in Tier 3 of local restrictions from 2 December.]

*Freely available online*

### **Tocilizumab for patients admitted to ICU with COVID-19 Pneumonia (Adults)**

Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA); 2020.

<https://www.cas.mhra.gov.uk/ViewandAcknowledgment/ViewAttachment.aspx?Attachmentid=103715>

[Following early positive signals of benefit from the immune modulation therapy domain of the REMAP-CAP platform trial, a UK wide position statement has been agreed to support off-label prescribing and access to tocilizumab, administered intravenously, for eligible COVID positive patients in the intensive care setting. The interim position statement will be reviewed as further evidence becomes available, including from the REMAP-CAP trial.]

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### **Urgent preparing for general practice to contribute to a potential Covid-19 vaccination programme.**

NHS England & NHS Improvement; 2020.

[https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/03/C0856\\_COVID-19-vaccineletter\\_9-Novrevb.pdf](https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/03/C0856_COVID-19-vaccineletter_9-Novrevb.pdf)

[Letter setting out what is needed to achieve vaccination plans in general practice and summarising the forthcoming service specification. NHSE/I are planning to be ready from any date from December 2020. See Updates and guidance for general practice for supplementary documents:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/preparedness-letters-for-general-practice/>]

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## **Systematic Review / Meta-Analysis**

### **Racial and Ethnic Disparities in COVID-19–Related Infections, Hospitalizations, and Deaths: A Systematic Review.**

Mackey K. *Annals of Internal Medicine* 2020;;doi.org/10.7326/M20-6306.

[African American/Black and Hispanic populations experience disproportionately higher rates of SARS-CoV-2 infection and COVID-19–related mortality but similar rates of case fatality. Differences in health care access and exposure risk may be driving higher infection and mortality rates.]

*Freely available online*

### **Viral cultures for COVID-19 infectious potential assessment - a systematic review**

Jefferson T. *Clinical Infectious Diseases* 2020;;ciaa1764.

[Complete live viruses are necessary for transmission, not the fragments identified by PCR. Prospective routine testing of reference and culture specimens and their relationship to symptoms, signs and patient co-factors should be used to define the reliability of PCR for assessing infectious potential. Those with high cycle threshold are unlikely to have infectious potential.]

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## **Evidence-Based Summary**

### **Audio Interview: Covid-19 in Europe and New Information on Vaccines**

Rubin E. *New England Journal of Medicine* 2020;;DOI: 10.1056/NEJMe2033666.

[In this audio interview conducted on November 18, 2020, the editors are joined by Dr. Charlotte Haug, international correspondent of the Journal, to discuss both recent vaccine trial results and the state of the pandemic in Europe.]

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### **Audio Interview: New Studies of Covid-19 Transmission**

Rubin E. *New England Journal of Medicine* 2020;;DOI: 10.1056/NEJMe2034094.

[In this audio interview conducted on November 25, 2020, the editors of NEJM look at new studies of disease transmission in closed environments and provide updates on convalescent plasma and hydroxychloroquine.]

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### **Racing to immunity: Journey to a COVID-19 vaccine and lessons for the future.**

Calvo Fernández E. *British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology* 2020;;doi: 10.1111/bcp.14686.

[This review compiles a list of all COVID-19 vaccines undergoing pre-clinical and clinical

testing. The most advanced vaccines are discussed in more detail, with a focus on their technology, advantages and disadvantages, as well as any available recent clinical findings. It aims to facilitate a more thorough understanding of the extensive COVID-19 clinical testing vaccine landscape as it unfolds.]

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### **[Long-COVID and COVID-19 rehabilitation.](#)**

Contact, Help, Advice and Information Network (CHAIN); 2020.

[https://www.chain-network.org.uk/subgroup\\_resources.html#top](https://www.chain-network.org.uk/subgroup_resources.html#top)

[Covid-19 resources from the CHAIN network. [Registration required].]

*Available with appropriate registration or membership*

## **Reports**

### **[Successful double-lung transplantation from a donor previously infected with SARS-CoV-2.](#)**

Ceulemans LJ. *The Lancet Respiratory Medicine* 2020;:https://doi.org/10.1016/S2213-2600(20)30524-5.

[We describe a successful double-lung transplantation from a donor who recovered from SARS-CoV-2 infection with screening of different specimens for SARS-CoV-2 during procurement and transplantation (figure 1; video).]

*Freely available online*

### **[Priority groups for coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccination: advice from the JCVI, 2 December 2020 .](#)**

Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC); 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/priority-groups-for-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-advice-from-the-jcvi-2-december-2020>

[Advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) on the groups that should be prioritised for vaccination. 3 December.]

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### **[Rapid evaluation of OptiGene RT-LAMP assay \(direct and RNA formats\).](#)**

Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC); 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rapid-evaluation-of-optigene-rt-lamp-assay-direct-and-rna-formats>

[This is a technical report by the NHS Test and Trace Scientific Validation and Assurance Group. It provides evidence verifying the performance of OptiGene RT-LAMP tests from pilot studies.]

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### **[The health, economic and social effects of COVID-19 and the tiered approach.](#)**

Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC); 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-health-economic-and-social-effects-of-covid-19-and-the-tiered-approach>

[Sets out the evidence and analysis in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) and the health, economic and social effects of the government's tiered approach.]

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## **Original Research**

### **[A Cluster-Randomized Trial of Hydroxychloroquine for Prevention of Covid-19](#)**

Mitja O. *New England Journal of Medicine* 2020;:DOI: 10.1056/NEJMoa2021801.

[We conducted an open-label, cluster-randomized trial involving asymptomatic contacts (n=2314) of patients (n=672) with polymerase-chain-reaction (PCR)-confirmed Covid-19 in Catalonia, Spain. A total of 1116 contacts were randomly assigned to receive hydroxychloroquine and 1198 to receive usual care.

Postexposure therapy with hydroxychloroquine did not prevent SARS-CoV-2 infection or symptomatic Covid-19 in healthy persons exposed to a PCR-positive case patient.]

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### **[A Randomized Trial of Convalescent Plasma in Covid-19 Severe Pneumonia](#)**

Simonovich V. *New England Journal of Medicine* 2020;:DOI: 10.1056/NEJMoa2031304.

[We randomly assigned hospitalized adult patients with severe Covid-19 pneumonia in a 2:1 ratio (n=228:105) to receive convalescent plasma or placebo. The primary outcome was the patient's clinical status 30 days after the intervention, as measured on a six-point ordinal scale ranging from total recovery to death. No significant differences were observed in clinical status or overall mortality between patients treated with convalescent plasma and those who received placebo.]

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### **[A Randomized Trial of Convalescent Plasma in Covid-19 Severe Pneumonia.](#)**

Simonovich VA. *New England Journal of Medicine* 2020;:10.1056/NEJMoa2031304.

[No significant differences were observed in clinical status or overall mortality between patients treated with convalescent plasma and those who received placebo.]

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### **[Clinical impact of molecular point-of-care testing for suspected COVID-19 in hospital \(COV-19POC\): a prospective, interventional, non-randomised, controlled study.](#)**

Brendish NJ. *The Lancet Respiratory Medicine* 2020;:https://doi.org/10.1016/S2213-2600(20)30454-9.

[Point-of-care testing is associated with large reductions in time to results and could lead to improvements in infection control measures and patient flow compared with centralised laboratory PCR testing.]

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### **[Critically Ill Patients with COVID-19: A Narrative Review on Prone Position.](#)**

Qadri SK. *Pulmonary Therapy* 2020;6(2):233-246.

[Based on the findings of our review, we recommend prone position in patients with moderate to severe COVID-19 ARDS as per existing guidelines. A trial of prone position should be considered for non-intubated COVID-19 patients with hypoxemic respiratory failure, as long as this does not result in a delay in intubation.]

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### **[Infection fatality risk for SARS-CoV-2 in community dwelling population of Spain: nationwide seroepidemiological study.](#)**

Pastor-Barriuso R. *BMJ* 2020;371:m4509.

[The increase in SARS-CoV-2 infection fatality risk after age 50 appeared to be more noticeable in men than in women. Based on the results of this study, fatality from covid-19

was greater than that reported for other common respiratory diseases, such as seasonal influenza.]

### **[Metformin and risk of mortality in patients hospitalised with COVID-19: a retrospective cohort analysis.](#)**

Bramante CT. *The Lancet Healthy Longevity* 2020;:https://doi.org/10.1016/S2666-7568(20)30033-7.

[Metformin was significantly associated with reduced mortality in women with obesity or type 2 diabetes who were admitted to hospital for COVID-19. Prospective studies are needed to understand mechanism and causality. If findings are reproducible, metformin could be widely distributed for prevention of COVID-19 mortality, because it is safe and inexpensive.]  
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### **[Repurposed Antiviral Drugs for Covid-19 — Interim WHO Solidarity Trial Results](#)**

WHO Solidarity Trial Consortium. *New England Journal of Medicine* 2020;:DOI: 10.1056/NEJMoa2023184.

[At 405 hospitals in 30 countries, 11,330 adults underwent randomization to one of 5 drug regimens or control. The interim results of the trial found that no drug definitely reduced mortality, overall or in any subgroup, or reduced initiation of ventilation or hospitalization duration. These remdesivir, hydroxychloroquine, lopinavir, and interferon regimens had little or no effect on hospitalized patients with Covid-19.]

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### **[SARS-CoV-2 Transmission among Marine Recruits during Quarantine](#)**

Letizia A. *New England Journal of Medicine* 2020;:DOI: 10.1056/NEJMoa2029717.

[We investigated SARS-CoV-2 infections among U.S. Marine Corps recruits (n= 1848) who underwent a 2-week quarantine at home followed by a second supervised 2-week quarantine at a closed campus that involved mask wearing, social distancing, and daily temperature and symptom monitoring.

Approximately 2% who had previously had -ve results for SARS-CoV-2 tested positive by day 14. Most recruits who tested +ve were asymptomatic, and no infections were detected through daily symptom monitoring.]

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### **[Ventilation management and clinical outcomes in invasively ventilated patients with COVID-19 \(PRoVENT-COVID\): a national, multicentre, observational cohort study.](#)**

Botta M. *The Lancet Respiratory Medicine* 2020;:https://doi.org/10.1016/S2213-2600(20)30459-8.

[The findings of this national study provide a basis for new hypotheses and sample size calculations for future trials of invasive ventilation for COVID-19. These data could also help in the interpretation of findings from other studies of ventilation practice and outcomes in invasively ventilated patients with COVID-19.]

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## **Statistics**

### **[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Infection Survey, UK: 4 December 2020.](#)**

Office for National Statistics (ONS); 2020.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/bulletins/coronaviruscovid19infectionsurveypilot/4december2020>

[The Covid-19 positivity rate in England has decreased in the past week (estimated 1 in 105 people within the community). There appears to be a decline in positivity in all age groups, with highest rates remaining in secondary school-aged children.]

*Freely available online*

### **[REACT-1 study of coronavirus transmission: November 2020 interim results.](#)**

Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC); 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/react-1-study-of-coronavirus-transmission-november-2020-interim-results>

[Results of real-time assessment of community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) during November 2020.]

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## **News**

### **[Daily Insight: Pandemic priorities.](#)**

*HSJ: Health Service Journal* 2020;:7029094.

[A vaccine that is highly effective at stopping people getting severe covid-19 has been licensed for use in the UK. The top priority is protecting care home residents, care home staff, people outside care homes aged over 80, and frontline NHS staff. Also: around 100 patients and NHS staff in the South East were told they had tested positive for covid when subsequent tests were negative. Four of the trusts involved decided to carry out harm reviews. 3 December.]

*Freely available online*

### **[Covid vaccines: Who decides if they are safe?](#)**

BBC News; 2020.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-55056016>

[This BBC article explains the process behind developing and approving the vaccine.]

### **[Gout drug Colchicine to be tested as COVID-19 treatment in UK trial.](#)**

Reuters; 2020.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-recovery/gout-drug-colchicine-to-be-tested-as-covid-19-treatment-in-uk-trial-idUKKBN2870WX>

[The RECOVERY trial, which is world's largest clinical trial of treatments for patients hospitalised with COVID-19, will randomly allocate at least 2,500 patients recruited to receive the anti-inflammatory colchicine, as inflammation is considered to play a major role in COVID-19.]

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