

Johnson government says COVID-19 infections could hit 50,000 per day as pandemic spins “out of control”

By Robert Stevens
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Coronavirus infections could reach 50,000 a day within weeks, with 200 deaths a day by November, Sir Chris Whitty, England’s chief medical officer, and Sir Patrick Vallance, chief scientific adviser to the Johnson government, warned yesterday.

Whitty and Vallance gave a televised address, following discussions with Cabinet ministers over the weekend. Prime Minister Boris Johnson is to chair a meeting of the government’s Cobra emergency committee today followed by a cabinet meeting. He is then expected to make a televised policy speech on the COVID-19 crisis.

Following the statements of Whitty and Vallance, the UK’s chief medical officers of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland moved the COVID-19 alert level from Level 3 to Level 4, stating “After a period of lower COVID cases and deaths, the number of cases are now rising rapidly and probably exponentially in significant parts of all four nations.” Level 4 means the virus “is in general circulation; transmission is high or rising exponentially.” The only level above this, Level 5, is described “as level 4 and there is a material risk of health care services being overwhelmed. Another 4,368 new infections and 11 deaths were recorded, with the number of cases requiring hospital ventilation in England doubling in eight days to 154.

Johnson has spent months lying that the pandemic was under control and “on a downward slope” to justify a disastrous reopening of the economy and schools. Whitty and Vallance have now admitted this has resulted in an exponential spread of the virus.

Citing the Office for National Statistics, Vallance said, “it’s now estimated that roughly 70,000 people in the UK have COVID infection and that about 6,000 people per day are getting the infection.” He added, “At the moment we think that the epidemic is doubling roughly every seven days. If that continues unabated, and this continues doubling every seven days, then what you see ... is that by mid-October you would end up with 49,000 new cases per

day.”

This level of infection would be expected to lead to about “200-plus deaths per day” a month after that, Vallance warned. This level of death was first seen on March 26, as the pandemic took hold with deaths soon rising to more than 1,000 a day soon after.

Vallance showed a slide pointing to the enormous growth in infections in Spain and France. He stated “that increase in case numbers has translated into an increase in hospitalisations. As the hospitalisations have increased ... you will see that ... not unexpectedly, deaths are also increasing. So there is a simple message from this slide: Which is as the disease spreads, as it spreads across age groups, we expect to see increase in hospitalisations and unfortunately those increases in hospitalisations will lead to increase in deaths.”

Addressing claims that the virus has mutated and is no longer as deadly as it once was, Vallance stated, “The virus has genetically moved a bit but it has not changed in terms of its propensity and its ability to cause disease and to cause death.”

Vallance, an early advocate of a “herd immunity” strategy, conceded that only an estimated 8 percent of the population had been infected and that antibodies for those who develop them can fade over time—with reports of people being re-infected. Therefore, the majority of the population remain susceptible.

A further graph showed infections as they affected age groups. Vallance said, “The lowest increase has been in children and in the population aged 70 to 79 but in every age group we’ve seen an increase.” Vallance asked rhetorically, “Could that increase be due to increased testing? The answer is no ... The proportion of people testing positive has increased even if testing stays flat.”

In March, the Johnson government was the first to state openly that herd immunity was its policy, with Vallance declaring that the infection of tens of millions was

“desirable.” What has driven government policy from the outset was not the health of the population, but how to restore the profits of the corporations.

After Vallance had laid out the perilous situation, Whitty said, “Ministers making decisions ... have to walk this very difficult balance. If we do too little this virus will go out of control and we get significant numbers of increased and indirect deaths but if we go too far the other way, then we can do damage to the economy...”

Neither Vallance nor Whitty made any attempt to explain why there was a resurgence of the coronavirus across Europe and in the UK. But the slides they referred to all showed the resurgence started from July, as the Johnson government and its counterparts reopened the economy. As Vallance said when introducing the rise in infections among all age groups, “what we see from July as we look at increases in cases per 100,000 of population, is an increase which has occurred over August and has increased into September.”

Vallance, Whitty, Johnson, et al know full well that it was the government ending of the lockdown and social distancing that has led to the explosion of coronavirus. Infections are taking place in the thousands at workplaces, on the public transport network, in schools, and will soon sweep through universities. By Monday evening, the number of schools recording infections had reached 1,439, with a poll revealing that 82 percent of school across England (around 20,000) have sent pupils home to self-isolate because they cannot get a coronavirus test.

The government’s propaganda is now centred on blaming the population, particularly the younger generation, for the spread of COVID. Last week it introduced, along with draconian fines, a “rule of six”—under which groups of six or more people are not allowed to gather. This will do nothing of substance to curtail the spread of COVID-19. It is as much of a fraud as the local lockdowns introduced in many parts of the country that are all porous and have done nothing to stop the spread of the disease. Yesterday, four more areas of Wales were put under lockdown, meaning around 13.5 million people in the UK live under local restrictions.

The failure of such partial measures is designed to encourage the sentiment that nothing could be done to halt the spread of coronavirus and that we must all learn to live with it.

The rampant spread of the disease was the inevitable product of the rush to open the economy in July and August, with the government doing nothing to develop a systematic, mass track and trace system over the last nine months. All its efforts were instead aimed at ensuring the handover of hundreds of billions to the corporations in bailout funds

while granting them access to free money by ramping up the printing of money via quantitative easing.

The government faces no opposition to its the murderous herd immunity policy within the political establishment and a compliant media. As COVID-19 cases surge, the BBC has come forward as the unvarnished mouthpiece for the Johnson government. On Monday BBC News published an article, “COVID: Is it time we learnt to live with the virus?” by health correspondent Nick Triggle. The message was clear. It’s time to get used to the idea of people dying from the disease.

Triggle proceeds to cite only scientists opposed to lockdown:

“Prof. Carl Heneghan, the head of the Centre for Evidence Based Medicine at Oxford University, [who] says the current situation is ‘utter chaos’ with a constant stream of new restrictions and schools sending whole year groups home when just one person tests positive.” Triggle writes falsely, “All this at a time when the level of infection is still very low,” adding, “This, Prof. Heneghan says, is the consequence of trying to suppress the virus. Instead, he argues we should accept it is here to stay and try to minimise the risks, while balancing that against the consequences of the actions we take.”

Triggle then quotes “Prof. Robert Dingwall, a sociologist and an adviser to the government,” who “believes the public may well be now at the stage where it is ‘comfortable’ with the idea that thousands will die from COVID just as they are that they die of flu.”

The article concludes under a subhead: “What about herd immunity?” with Triggle citing Oxford University scientist Sunetra Gupta’s support for a herd immunity strategy. “This is how we have always managed viruses,” Gupta says.

Disparaging the clear majority of scientists and health professionals critical of the government, Triggle writes that Dingwall “believes it is only a particular element of the public health and scientific leadership who worry about driving down the infection level ...”

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