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# Britain: Vaccines are not the magic bullet - « None of us are safe until we are all safe »

Wednesday 21 April 2021, by [WILKES Roy](#) (Date first published: 15 April 2021).

**Article by Roy Wilkes (Secretary, Zero Covid UK).**

Even a stopped watch shows the right time twice a day. Boris Johnson's gamble of placing advanced orders for 400 million doses of a range of vaccines appears to have paid off.

Thanks to an extraordinary effort by local public sector health authorities (in stark contrast to the privatised test and trace fiasco last summer), over 30 million adults in the UK have now been vaccinated, with over 8 million receiving two doses. The partial lockdown that has been in force since early January has also had a significant impact: the number of people testing positive for Covid has fallen to below 2 500 per day, and daily deaths are now below 40.

But appearances can be deceptive, and placing all of our eggs in the vaccination basket is still an irresponsible gamble with all of our lives. Zero Covid UK has always said that relying on a vaccine while allowing the virus to circulate freely is an open invitation to viral mutation. We now know that the 501Y.V2 variant originating in South Africa is partially resistant to both Astra Zeneca and Pfizer vaccines. There are 44 confirmed cases of the variant, mostly in South London. The entire population of the affected boroughs, a total of 650 000 people, are being called in for testing in order to try and suppress transmission of this worrying variant.

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None of us are safe until we are all safe. The virus is still prevalent in many countries, particularly Brazil and India, but increasingly across Europe as well. There will be new variants, and some of them will be even more resistant to vaccines than 501Y.V2 is. Campaigns for vaccine equity are therefore more important than ever. Jonas Salk, who discovered the polio vaccine, refused to patent it, arguing that it would be like wanting to "patent the sun". Today's pharmaceutical corporations have no such qualms, and would happily patent the air we breathe if they could turn a profit from it. Astra Zeneca for example is charging African countries more than double the price being paid in Europe. Nick Deardan of Global Justice Now will be speaking at our international conference on 24<sup>th</sup> April, along with speakers from Ireland, Scotland, Germany, Brazil and South Africa. Register now for this important meeting.

But the most important lesson of 501Y.V2 is that vaccination is not a magic bullet to get us out of the Covid crisis. Vaccines must form part of an elimination strategy, they cannot replace such a strategy. We will still need to close schools and non-essential workplaces when necessary to contain community transmission. And above all, we need a locally run and effective public sector system of Find, Test, Trace, Isolate and Support (FTTIS), to replace the absurdly inefficient and ineffective but highly profitable Serco operation that the Johnson government has lumbered us with.

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The support component of FTTIS is crucial. Covid has hit the poorest sections of our community the hardest, Black and Asian communities hardest of all, and has spread the most among low paid insecure workers who cannot afford to self isolate. Full financial and social support must be provided for everyone who tests positive, otherwise there is literally no point tracing and testing people. FTTIS is now a major campaigning priority for Zero Covid.

In line with its over reliance on vaccination as the solution to Covid, the government is now trialing "vaccine passports" as another opportunity for corporate money-grabbing. There are serious civil liberties concerns over what many see as a back-door excuse for introducing ID cards. And ironically, vaccine passports may well discourage many people from getting vaccinated, for example migrants who are concerned about how the scheme might be used against them.

Despite a death toll of 130 000 and a per capita death rate higher even than the USA or Brazil, the Johnson government is currently enjoying a "vaccine bounce" in popularity, as its "road map" out of lockdown unfolds. This bounce may be very short lived however, particularly if a vaccine resistant variant ushers in a catastrophic third wave. A zero Covid strategy is needed now more than ever.

**Roy Wilkes**

**Zero Covid: An international movement**

**Saturday 24 April, 13:00 - 17:00 (BST)**

Register: <https://rebrand.ly/zc-international>

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**P.S.**

• Anti\*capitalist Resistance. 15 April 2021:

<https://www.anticapitalistresistance.org/post/vaccines-are-not-the-magic-bulletncc.org/profile/f6659890-8215-434a-8c20-6ec7c4aedfbf/profile>