COVID-19 media surveillance

23 July 2020; 18:30 weekly brief

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) remains a mayor news topic, with over 90 thousand articles per day on Wednesday (in 70 languages, as detected by MEDISYS).
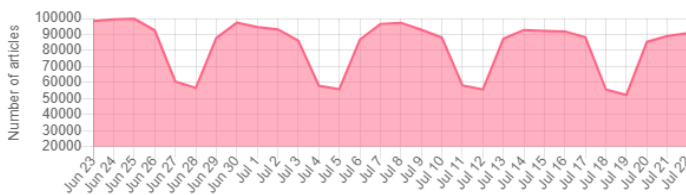

Figure 1 Media reports on Covid-19 (source: EMM/MEDISYS)
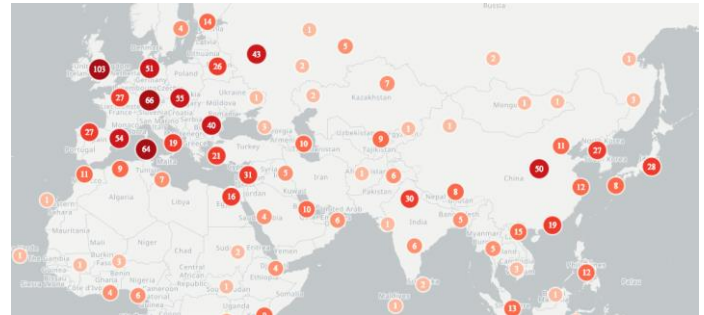

Figure 2 Geolocations mentioned in coronavirus media reports showing clusters of media reports on Italy, France, Spain, Germany, the UK, Russia, India, China, South Korea and Japan (source: EMM/MEDISYS)

Headlines

- US: Pfizer gets 1.95 billion USD to produce Vaccine by year's end while the US get close to 4 million cases and daily deaths reach highest level since May
- Brazil sets daily record of new coronavirus cases with nearly 68,000 infections
- Spain reports 730 new cases as new lockdown rules have been placed on a neighborhood in Pamplona
- Italy's mortality in March was double that of previous years showing how badly undercounted initial estimates may have been
- France: masks mandatory in all enclosed public spaces amid fresh outbreaks
- Germany links over 2,000 cases to slaughterhouse
- Sweden: another 3,000 deaths are likely in the country according to Sweden's Public Health Agency
- Belgium's average of new coronavirus cases almost twice as high as last week
- Luxembourg counts more than 1,000 active cases
- Romania's daily cases hit record high with 1,112 new cases
- Russia's business and political elite have been given experimental vaccine since April
- Israel approves temporary cellphone tracking of COVID-19 carriers amid surge
- South Africa could be a "precursor" for outbreaks across African continent according to WHO as the country ranked fifth world-wide
- Madagascar's hospitals overwhelmed after a spike in cases
- India reported its biggest 1-day jump with over 45,000 cases and 1,129 deaths
- Australia: surge in Melbourne could take weeks to subside despite a lockdown and orders to wear masks
- South Korean economy suffers worst contraction since 1998 while 59 new cases were reported due to cluster infections traced to a military unit and nursing homes
- China reports 22 new coronavirus cases, including 18 in Xinjiang
- Japan: Tokyo reports record high 366 new coronavirus cases on July 23

Twitter

The following news were found among the most mentioned/retweeted items:

- "Coronavirus: Oxford vaccine triggers immune response" (bbc)
- "We are sleepwalking toward economic catastrophe. The cliff is totally visible in front of us: The future is grim if Congress doesn't act on the economy." (vox)
- "Coronavirus: first evidence of its infectious risk in exhaled air" (leparisien)
- "Spain sees the spread of the new coronavirus triple in less than three weeks" (adnradio)
- "Concerning situation in Finistère with a reproduction rate at 3.1" (bfmtv)
- "Iran president says up to 25 million might have been infected with Covid-19 since pandemic began" (time)
- "WHO deeply concerned about the impact of Coronavirus on indigenous populations in America" (minci)
- "Data shows where Israelis contract the coronavirus. Weekly data provided to the coronavirus Knesset committee shows that only very few Israelis get ill after visiting beaches, pools or bars" (haaretz)

The hashtags #vaccine, #vacuna, #oxford and #oxfordvaccine were trending following the publication about the Oxford vaccine (thelancet).

The most mentioned English sources were the New York Times, CNN, the Washington Post, USA Today and BBC.

Infobae, CNN (Spanish Version), El Pais, RT (Spanish Version), El Diario and Clarin, and Le Monde and Le Parisien were among the most mentioned Spanish and French sources, respectively.

99 *Extracted Quotes*

Michael Ryan (WHO, Executive Director):
"I am very concerned right now that we are beginning to see an acceleration of disease in Africa"; South Africa may, unfortunately, be a precursor, it may be a warning for what will happen in the rest of Africa."

🔍 *Fact Check*

Fact checked: health-related claims
- Fact checkers debunk claims, shared, among others, by Instagram influencers, that masks do not help to reduce coronavirus transmission (estadaoverifica) and claims that masks are even dangerous given that they cause decreased oxygen intake and increased "toxic inhalation" (boomlive).
- Fact checkers debunk a series of false COVID-19 cures, including eucalyptus (newtral), cabbage (factcheck.kz) and a mixture of pepper, honey and ginger (aosfatos).

Fact checked: anti-vax narratives
- Fact checkers debunk claims from Russian news sites that the US has started testing a COVID-19 vaccine on its armed forces and there are already victims and that US virologists have arrived in Ukraine to test a COVID-19 vaccine on the Ukrainian population (stopfake).
- Fact checkers debunk claims that the new COVID-19 vaccine contains "replicable digitisable RNA" that is activated by 5G technology and causes the virus to "reactivate" (afpfactual).

Fact checked: conspiracy theories
- Fact checkers debunk claims that COVID-19 tests have been tainted with coronavirus for "many months" in an attempt to spread the virus (aapfactcheck).
- Fact checkers debunk several claims made by David Icke in the course of a two-hour interview published in April 2020. Among the debunked claims are: RT-PCR tests cannot detect the virus, anyone with flu-like symptoms is diagnosed as with COVID-19, Wuhan was the first Chinese city to introduce 5G, just before the outbreak (afpfactual).
- Fact checkers debunk claims that "Operation Lockstep" - a document allegedly released by the Rockefeller Foundation - shows how global elites planned the COVID-19 pandemic for the last 10 years in order to implement a police state (snopes).

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