

Questions to the government CV 19 advisers

Monday's slide show was short and not very informative. They did present a worrying increase in hospital admissions. The rest of the numbers were curiously selected.

There was no published figure for R , no comment on how they are now calculating it and no slide to show how they think it has varied over time, yet R drives their models and much of their thinking. Their argument that we could see a doubling of cases every week for four weeks implies they think R is now high. It would be good to hear more on why they think that and how they compute it.

The first two graphs showed upward trends in daily cases and daily deaths in Spain and France. The two graphs were shown side by side. The death rate scale was one hundredth of the case rate scale, to achieve similar looking graphs. There was no graph for Sweden which followed a different approach to the virus, nor for Germany and Italy where there is not the same growth in cases.

They then turned to England, and changed from daily case numbers to weekly case numbers, meaning higher figures. Their speculation over future trends was then revealed with a demonstration of a big surge in cases were they to double every week for four weeks.

It would be good to have a proper presentation on the death rate so far, with improved data to smooth out the different definitions used over the pandemic to date. It would be good to know the results of the sample testing of the population over time.

They showed a series of numbers for the proportion of the population that have antibodies which may strengthen their immunity to a future attack. What was odd was the 16 August latest figure was considerably lower than the figures from May/June/July. It would be good to have an explanation of this.

Based on this the government has decided on some further restrictions on social and business life and said they are likely to last for six months. It is time for a proper Parliamentary debate on these matters, to tease more out from the advice and to look around the world at what has worked best to contain the disease and keep economies turning. I and others are trying to get an opportunity to explore the options in Parliament.