

The state of the pandemic – show your papers?

It was tragic news from the USA that the country surpassed 500,000 deaths this week from CV 19. The President and Vice President commemorated the sad landmark in a moving ceremony and with appropriate words. The USA and the UK make daily announcements of the deaths attributed to the virus, with Ministers and Administration representatives making regular statements of sympathy for the relatives of those lost.

The EU passed through the 500,000 deaths before the USA. They have gone over to weekly reporting, and last announced 515,519 deaths. The incidence of the virus and the death rate has been very variable around the EU. Belgium's death rate has been more than three times that of Greece. Luxembourg has had more cases relative to the size of its population than most, whilst Finland has low figures for cases and deaths. The world figures released daily on the worldometer does not include EU figures so you have to add up all the relevant national figures. This is surprising given the leadership role the EU has adopted over responses to the pandemic in member states. It would be good to see more analysis of the reasons for the very different rates of cases and deaths amongst neighbouring states.

Asian countries led by Japan have had much lower case rates and lower death rates than the Americas and Europe. I have yet to see a good account of why the spread of the disease and the fatalities have been so much lower in much of Asia. It would be good to know if it was to do with the nature of the response, or to the treatments, or to greater natural immunity from past exposures to similar viruses or to diet or other issues.

The U.K. after Israel has achieved much more in offering vaccines to people vulnerable to the virus and vaccinating most at risk. In both France and Germany misleading negative briefings against the Astra Zeneca vaccine has held up acceptance of vaccination on top of the slower moves of the EU authorities to approve the jab and to buy enough for fast roll out.

We now learn that the U.K. is considering using vaccination certificates for other purposes. Ministers accept there are practical and moral problems with such an idea. I would be interested in your thoughts on this possible limitation on freedoms.