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Mr. Lee’s Commentary and Dairy



Inside C2

# Southern DAILY

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## No half measures and mind the gap - UK nod for AstraZeneca vaccine raises more questions



FILE PHOTO: AstraZeneca’s logo is reflected in a drop on a syringe needle in this illustration taken November 9, 2020. REUTERS/Dado Ruvic/Illustration

LONDON (Reuters) - British health officials greenlighted the AstraZeneca and Oxford COVID-19 shot on Wednesday but also rebuffed one of their central claims: that a half-dose followed by a standard dose offered more protection against infection.

The reassessment of the best dosing regimen for the vaccine was an unexpected move by Britain’s medicines regulator based on its own analysis of as-yet-unpublished data and it raised fresh questions about the efficacy of a vaccine which has yet to be approved in other countries.

Though cheaper and easier to distribute than rival shots, the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine has been plagued with uncertainty about its most effective dosage ever since data published last month showed a half-dose followed by a full dose had a 90% success rate while two full shots were 62% effective.

Oxford researchers said that the more successful outcome was an “intriguing result” that merited further testing.

A Reuters investigation, however, found that the existence of the low-dose/standard-dose arm was the result of a potency miscalculation by Oxford researchers, casting doubt on the robustness of the result.

Munir Pirmohamed, chair of a British advisory group on COVID-19 vaccines, validated those doubts on Wednesday saying the 90% efficacy rate did not hold up under

analysis. Instead, Pirmohamed said a higher success rate may be due to a longer gap between the administration of the first and second shots.

“The low dose/standard dose regimen, although it has been quoted to have an efficacy of 90%, this is confounded by the fact that the interval between the first and second dose was quite long,” Pirmohamed told a news conference.

“And we feel that that result may be related to that interval, rather than the dose itself,” he said.

The UK’s COVID-19 vaccine chair, Wei Shen Lim, said a single dose of Oxford/AstraZeneca’s vaccine was around 70% effective from 21 days until a second dose was given.

Pirmohamed said that leaving the three month gap rather than a one month gap between doses could lift the success rate of the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine to 80%.

After British health officials disclosed the new details about the efficacy of the vaccine, an AstraZeneca spokesman said: “It is for the regulators to authorise how the vaccine should be used.”

### RELATED COVERAGE

Factbox-Astra-Oxford vaccine: what’s been said about dosage and efficacy

“Factors they will have taken into account include the comparable immunogenic response after two doses with either regimen, as is the protection against severe disease (100%),” he said.

“We believe we have got the best vaccination strategy approved by the MHRA.”

### A ‘WINNING FORMULA’

Faced with a record surge in infections driven by a highly contagious variant of the virus, Britain is prioritising getting a first dose of a vaccine to as many people as possible over giving second doses. Delaying the distribution of second shots would help stretch the supply.

Britain’s Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) recommended an interval of between 4-12 weeks between doses of the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine and also updated its guidance for a second dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech shot saying it could be administered within 12 weeks, rather than the 21 days originally recommended.

Hundreds of thousands of Britons have already received their first dose of the Pfizer vaccine after the UK was the first country to approve its rollout, with second doses due from this week.

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# WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

12/30/2020

CORONAVIRUS DIARY

Wealee@scdaily.com

## We Got The COVID-19 Pfizer Vaccination

Today my wife and I walked into the world famous CHI St. Luke's Medical Center to get the COVID-19 Pfizer vaccine shot which was arranged by our daughter Margaret. In the lobby area we were greeted by very professional nurses and got the shot at 2:30 pm. We are so fortunate at this coronavirus pandemic time. We were among one or two million people to get the vaccination so far.

Since early this year, Margaret has worked at the hospital. We have been so worried about her safety, but she is so devoted to do everything a dedicated professional medical doctor needs to do.

It was many years ago when Margaret studied at New York Columbia University. Every time I went to visit her, we always invited all her roommates to eat Korean food in front of the university. In the winter days especially, the barbecue made us warmer.

Margaret became a medical doctor almost ten years ago. With her warm personality and smiling face, along with her natural kindness, she has had a very successful career as a physician.

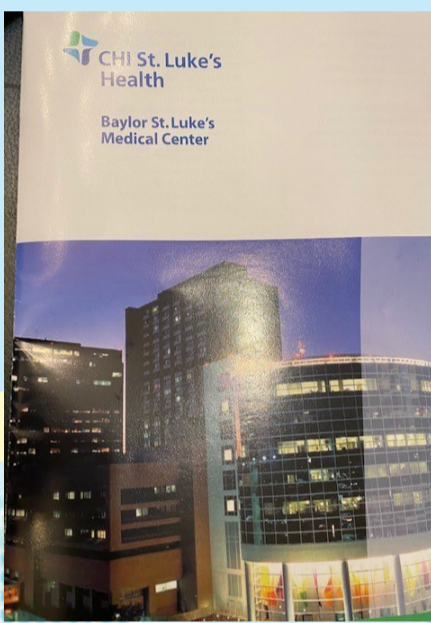
We are also so fortunate and proud because with Margaret's help, we had the chance to get vaccinated at a very early



stage.

We all hope more vaccine will be on the way. This is problematic and the only chance to rescue our society.

Here we are all thankful for the many vaccine researchers and medical teams on the front line fighting the virus every day.



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Publisher Southern Daily Wea H. Lee

Stay Home!

## BUSINESS

Wear Mask!

An endless flow of information is coming at us constantly: It might be an article a friend shared on Facebook with a sensational headline or wrong information about the spread of the coronavirus. It could even be a call from a relative wanting to talk about a political issue.

All this information may leave many of us feeling as though we have no energy to engage.

As a philosopher who studies knowledge-sharing practices, I call this experience "epistemic exhaustion." The term "epistemic" comes from the Greek word episteme, often translated as "knowledge." So epistemic exhaustion is more of a knowledge-related exhaustion. It is not knowledge itself that tires out many of us. Rather, it is the process of trying to gain or share knowledge under challenging circumstances. Currently, there are at least three common sources that, from my perspective, are leading to such exhaustion. But there are also ways to deal with them.

### 1. Uncertainty

For many, this year has been full of uncertainty. In particular, the coronavirus pandemic has generated uncertainty about health, about best practices and about the future.

At the same time, Americans have faced uncertainty about the U.S. presidential election: first due to delayed results and now over questions about a peaceful transition of power.



As Trump supporters denounce the 2020 election results, feelings of uncertainty can come up for others. **Karla Ann Cote/NurPhoto via Getty Images** Experiencing uncertainty can stress most of us out. People tend to prefer the planned and the predictable. Figures from

## Information Exhaustion – What Can We Do About It?

17th-century French philosopher René Descartes to 20th-century Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein have recognized the significance of having certainty in our lives.

With information so readily available, people may be checking news sites or social media in hopes of finding answers. But often, people are instead greeted with more reminders of uncertainty.

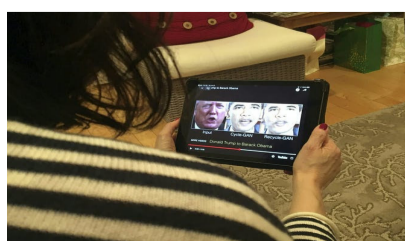
### 2. Polarization

Political polarization is stressing many Americans out.

As political scientist Lilliana Mason notes in her book, "Uncivil Disagreement: How Politics Became Our Identity," Americans have been increasingly dividing politically "into two partisan teams."

Many writers have discussed the negative effects of polarization, such as how it can damage democracy. But discussions about the harms of polarization often overlook the toll polarization takes on our ability to gain and share knowledge.

That can happen in at least two ways. First, as philosopher Kevin Vallier has argued, there is a "causal feedback loop" between polarization and distrust. In other words, polarization and distrust fuel one another. Such a cycle can leave people feeling unsure whom to trust or what to believe.



A woman views a manipulated video



**Viral misinformation is everywhere. This includes political propaganda, misleading messaging from private corporations, and misinformation about COVID-19.**

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

**that changes what is said by President Donald Trump and former President Barack Obama. ROB LEVER/AFP via Getty Images**

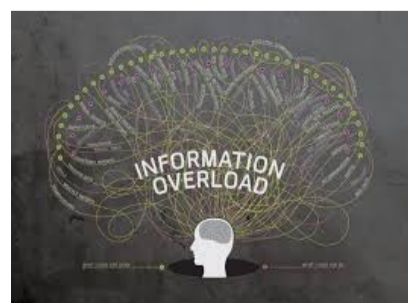
Second, polarization can lead to competing narratives because in a deeply polarized society, as studies show, we can lose common ground and tend to have less agreement.

For those inclined to take the views of others seriously, this can create additional cognitive work. And when the issues are heated or sensitive, this can create additional stress and emotional burdens, such as sadness over damaged friendships or anger over partisan rhetoric.

### 3. Misinformation

Viral misinformation is everywhere. This includes political propaganda in the United States and around the world. People are also inundated with advertising and misleading messaging from private corporations, what philosophers Cailin O'Connor and James Owen Weatherall have called "industrial propaganda." And in 2020, the public is also dealing with misinformation about COVID-19.

claims about COVID-19 in rapid succession. This flooding of misinformation in rapid succession, a tactic known as a Gish gallop, makes it challenging and time-consuming for fact checkers to refute the many falsehoods following one after another.



### What to do?

With all this uncertainty, polarization and misinformation, feeling tired is understandable. But there are things one can do.

The American Psychological Association suggests coping with uncertainty through activities like limiting news consumption and focusing on things in one's control. Another option is to work on becoming more comfortable with un-

certainty through practices such as meditation and the cultivation of mindfulness.

To deal with polarization, consider communicating with the goal of creating empathetic understanding rather than "winning." Philosopher Michael Hannon describes empathetic understanding as "the ability to take up another person's perspective."



As for limiting the spread of misinformation: Share only those news stories that you've read and verified. And you can prioritize outlets that meet high ethical journalistic or fact-checking standards. These solutions are limited and imperfect, but that's all right. Part of resisting epistemic exhaustion is learning to live with the limited and imperfect. No one has time to vet all the headlines, correct all the misinformation or gain all the relevant knowledge. To deny this is to set oneself up for exhaustion. (Courtesy the-conversation.com)



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Editor's Choice



A destroyed car is seen on a street after an earthquake in Sisak, Croatia. Slaven Branislav Babic/PIXSELL



People react as dust rises after explosions hit Aden airport, upon the arrival of the newly-formed Yemeni government in Aden, Yemen. REUTERS/Fawaz Salman



U.S. Vice President-elect Kamala Harris receives a dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine at United Medical Center in Washington. REUTERS/Leah Millis



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson gives a thumbs up after signing the Brexit trade deal with the EU at number 10 Downing Street in London. Leon Neal/Pool



Farmer Tomislav Suknaic touches his horse in front of his damaged household in Majske Poljan village after an earthquake in Croatia. REUTERS/Antonio Bronic



The full moon known as the Cold Moon rises next to One World Trade Center and the New York City skyline as it is seen from Jersey City, New Jersey. REUTERS/Eduardo Munoz



American Airlines flight 718, the first U.S. Boeing 737 MAX commercial flight since regulators lifted a 20-month grounding in November, takes off from Miami, Florida. REUTERS/Marco Bello



Gabriel Cervera and Sanjana Krishnan take a break from treating patients infected with the coronavirus at United Memorial Medical Center in Houston, Texas. REUTERS/Callaghan O'Hare

FTC And States Sue Facebook  
For Illegally Stifling Competition



Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg appearing before the U.S. Congress.

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

State and federal antitrust enforcers accused Facebook of illegally hurting competition by buying smaller rivals and engaging in other harmful behavior in a pair of antitrust lawsuits Wednesday.

**Why it matters:** With Google already facing an antitrust lawsuit from the Justice Department and state attorneys general, the Facebook case is another major test of the government’s power to police internet giants.

**Details:** The Federal Trade Commission and 48 state and territorial attorneys general, in parallel lawsuits filed in federal court, both say Facebook has maintained an illegal monopoly shored up in particular by the 2012 purchase of Instagram and the 2014 acquisition of WhatsApp.

**The FTC says** Facebook has limited competitors’ access to code that would let them link their services to Facebook-run platforms.

- The agency is asking the court to make Facebook unwind the Instagram and WhatsApp acquisitions, among other, less drastic remedies.
- The vote at the five-member commission to proceed with the lawsuit was 3-2, with

Chairman Joe Simons, a Republican, siding with agency Democrats in favor and the other GOP commissioners opposing.

**The state coalition** says Facebook’s actions stifling competition have denied Americans access to alternative social networks that would better protect their privacy.



- “While consumers have been spending time keeping in touch on Facebook, Facebook has been spending time surveilling users personal information and profiting from it,” New York AG Letitia James told reporters on a video conference Wednesday.
- The AGs want the court to block Facebook from engaging in anti-competitive conduct and ask that it force the company to tell states in advance before em-

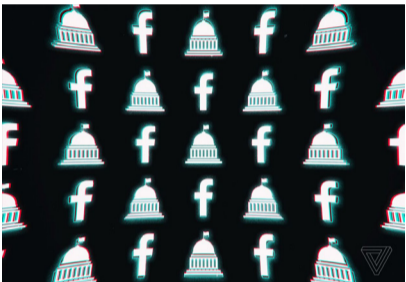
barking on any acquisitions worth \$10 million or more. They also suggest the court go so far as to demand Facebook divest past acquisitions or other lines of business.

**Catch up quick:** Past acquisitions that helped turn Facebook into the juggernaut it is today have come under intense scrutiny, and Congressional antitrust leaders grilled Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg on them this summer.

- The FTC has been studying past tech mergers to see if they need to be re-evaluated in light of how the industry has evolved, and Chairman Joe Simons has said he wouldn’t rule out unwinding past mergers.

**What they’re saying:** Facebook has argued consumers benefitted from those mergers, and that neither Instagram nor WhatsApp would be what it is today without Facebook at the helm.

- “The most important fact in this case, which the Commission does not mention in its 53-page complaint, is that it cleared these acquisitions years ago,” Facebook general counsel Jennifer Newstead said in a statement. “The government now wants a do-over, sending a chilling warning to American business that no sale is ever final.”



**The big picture:** The flurry of antitrust activity in the online sector that began in 2019 is coming to fruition, but the cases will take time to go through court.

- James announced the multi-state Facebook antitrust investigation that resulted in Wednesday’s suit last year, shortly after Facebook revealed it was facing a separate FTC antitrust investigation.
- Eleven Republican state AGs joined the DOJ’s lawsuit against Google in October, while a separate state investigation of the search giant is expected to wrap

up soon.

**What’s next:** Facebook will have to decide whether to ask that the suits be dismissed or to dig in for a lengthy court battle. With Joe Biden taking office next month, the FTC’s case will ultimately be seen through by an agency with a different lineup of commissioners and a new chairperson. (Courtesy axios.com)

**Related**  
**Facebook Accused of Breaking Antitrust Laws**



**When he spoke to the House judiciary subcommittee in July, the Facebook chief executive, Mark Zuckerberg, said his company had not squashed competition.** (Pool photo by Graeme Jennings)

WASHINGTON — The Federal Trade Commission and more than 40 states accused Facebook on Wednesday of buying up its rivals to illegally squash competition, and they called for the deals to be unwound, escalating regulators’ battle against the biggest tech companies in a way that could remake the social media industry.

Federal and state regulators of both parties, who have investigated the company for over 18 months, said in separate lawsuits that Facebook’s purchases, especially Instagram for \$1 billion in 2012 and WhatsApp for \$19 billion two years later, eliminated competition that could have one day challenged the company’s dominance.

Since those deals, Instagram and WhatsApp have skyrocketed in popularity, giving Facebook control over three of the world’s most popular social media and messaging apps. The applications have helped catapult Facebook from a company started in a college dorm room 16 years ago to an internet powerhouse valued at more than \$800 billion.



Mark Zuckerberg

The lawsuits, filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, underscore the growing bipartisan and international tsunami against Big Tech. Lawmakers and regulators have zeroed in on the grip that Facebook, Google, Amazon and Apple maintain on commerce, electronics, social networking, search and online advertising, remaking the nation’s economy.

President Trump has argued repeatedly that the tech giants have too much power and influence, and allies of President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr. make similar complaints. The federal case against Facebook is widely expected to continue under Mr. Biden’s administration. (Courtesy msn.com)



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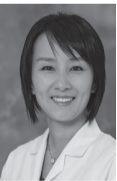
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