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Inside C2

Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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Train crash kills 50 in Taiwan's deadliest rail tragedy in decades

HUALIEN, Taiwan (Reuters) - A Taiwan express train with almost 500 aboard derailed in a tunnel on Friday after hitting a truck that had slid down a bank onto the track, killing at least 50 passengers and injuring 146 in the island's worst rail disaster in seven decades

Images from the scene showed some carriages ripped apart by the impact, with others crumpled, hindering rescuers in their efforts to reach passengers.

By mid-afternoon no one was still trapped, though the fire department said it had found body parts, meaning the number of those killed, who included the driver, was likely to rise.

"People just fell all over each other, on top of one another," a woman who survived the crash told domestic television. "It was terrifying. There were whole families there."

Taiwan's government said there were 496 people on the train, including 120 without seats. Many were tourists and people heading home at the start of a traditional long weekend holiday to tend to family graves. One French citizen was amongst the dead, officials said.

The train was travelling from Taipei, the capital, to the southeastern city of Taitung.

It came off the rails north of the eastern city of Hualien after hitting a truck that had slid off a road from a nearby construction site, Feng Hui-sheng, the Taiwan Railways Administration's deputy director, told reporters.

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Feng said the manager of the site, which was stabilising the mountainside to prevent landslides, visited around 9 a.m. (0100 GMT) and stopped his truck in front of the site office.

"At present it is suspected because the vehicle wasn't braked properly, it slid



for around 20 metres along the site access road and entered the eastern trunk line," he added.

Survivors described their terror as the train slammed into the truck and ground to a halt.

a tilted, derailed carriage as some walked on the train's roof to exit the tunnel.

The accident occurred at the beginning of a long weekend for the traditional Tomb Sweeping Day holiday.



Taiwan's mountainous east coast is a tourist destination. The railway that snakes down from Taipei hugs the coast and is known for its tunnels, in one of which the crash took place. The link to Taipei opened in 1979.

Taiwan's state-owned railways are generally reliable and efficient, but have had a patchy safety record over the years.

The last major crash was in 2018, when 18 people died and 175 were injured when a train

derailed in the island's northeast.

In 1948, 64 people are estimated to have died when a train burst into flames in northern Taiwan.

Reporting by Ann Wa

The official Central News Agency said police had taken in the manager for questioning. The fire department showed a picture of what appeared to be wreckage of the truck beside the derailed train, with an aerial image of one end of the train still on the track next to the construction site.

"It suddenly came to a stop and then everything shook," one told local television. "It was all so chaotic."

Passengers in some carriages still in the tunnel had to be led to safety, the railway administration said.

Images showed an injured passenger carried away on a stretcher, with her head and neck in a brace, while others gathered suitcases and bags in

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WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

CORONAVIRUS DIARY

04/02/2021



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Community Resource Center Will Open Soon

Mr. Wea Lee
Chairman,
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Community Empowerment Organization's
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Building a stronger community through information and access to resources

SPECIAL GUEST
U.S. CONGRESSMAN AL GREEN

Date: Tuesday, April 6, 2021
Time: 12NOON-1:00PM
Venue: Southern News Group Building
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Houston Tx. 77072
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In collaboration with SEONE Corporation

at the Southern News Group building. Our mission is to serve as a one stop-shop for the underserved minority population in the Houston southwest area. We plan to provide members of the community with information that will empower them to improve their quality of life and to serve as a way for them to access the rich pool of resources available to them.

Members of the community who have questions about any of the variety of issues we will address are encouraged to schedule interviews with the center. We will link the person with a professional who can best address their needs. The areas include disaster assistance, loans and grants, small business development, tax information, immigration, legal issues, workforce, housing and renting, veterans issues, medical, healthcare service, education, skills development, children and child welfare and city services.

Our service will be led by senior educator, Dr. Tina Agosa and many



other assistants.

After the pandemic attacked our community last year, more than one-half million people have lost their lives. This tragedy in our community made me so sad that I couldn't go to sleep at night. I kept on thinking, "What can we do for all of us?" Finally, we are putting this dream into action.

Dear brothers and sisters, please join our mission. Come join us and help us rescue our own people as well as the whole nation.

We sincerely need to send out our appreciation to Congressman Al Green. He is our true brother. Whenever we need the help, he is always there.

Southern **DAILY** Make Today Different

Editor's Choice



Young unaccompanied migrants, who range in age from 3 to 9, sit inside a playpen at the U.S. Customs and Border Protection facility, the main detention center for unaccompanied children in the Rio Grande Valley, in Donna, Texas, March 30, 2021. The facility is holding 4,100 migrants, most of whom are unaccompanied minors, according to a pool report, four times its pre-COVID



A health worker from St Thomas' hospital stands behind a wall, being painted in hearts as a memorial to all those who have died so far in the UK from COVID-19, in London, Britain, March 29, 2021. REUTERS/Toby Melville



New York Governor Andrew Cuomo arrives to visit a new vaccination center for the coronavirus at Grace Baptist Church in Mount Vernon, New York. REUTERS/Mike Segar



A man waves an Egyptian flag as Ever Given, one of the world's largest container ships, is fully floated after blocking the waterway for almost a week in the Suez Canal, Egypt March 29,



Displaced people are seen at the Shire campus of Aksum University, which was turned into a temporary shelter for people displaced by conflict, in the town of Shire, Tigray region, Ethiopia, March 14, 2021. Families described fleeing from ethnic Amhara militia in the Tigray region, four months after the Ethiopian government declared victory over the rebellious



Shade Ajayi, 50, takes notes during class at Ilorin Grammar School in Ilorin, Kwara state, Nigeria, March 25, 2021. Ajayi had never set foot in a classroom until middle age. Now 50, the businesswoman who makes and sells purses and bags is happily learning to read and write alongside students nearly four decades younger than her. REUTERS/Temilade Adelaja

Promising COVID Research Developments
Two More Life-Saving COVID-19 Drugs Discovered



Two more life-saving drugs have been found that can cut deaths by a quarter in patients who are sickest with Covid.

By Guest Writer Michelle Roberts Health editor, BBC News online

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

The anti-inflammatory medications, given via a drip, save an extra life for every 12 treated, say researchers who have carried out a trial in NHS intensive care units. Supplies are already available across the UK so they can be used immediately to save hundreds of lives, say experts. There are over 30,000 Covid patients in UK hospitals - 39% more than in April. The UK government is working closely with the manufacturer, to ensure the drugs - tocilizumab and sarilumab - continue to be available to UK patients. As well as saving more lives, the treatments speed up patients' recovery and reduce the length of time that critically-ill patients need to spend in intensive care by about a week. Both appear to work equally well and add to the benefit already found with a cheap steroid drug called dexamethasone. **Life-saving coronavirus drug 'major breakthrough'** Although the drugs are not cheap, costing around £750 to £1,000 per patient, on top of the £5 course of dexamethasone, the advan-

tage of using them is clear - and less than the cost per day of an intensive care bed of around £2,000, say experts. Lead researcher Prof Anthony Gordon, from Imperial College London, said: "For every 12 patients you treat with these drugs you would expect to save a life. It's a big effect." In the **REMAP-CAP trial** carried out in six different countries, including the UK, with around 800 intensive care patients: Nearly 36% of intensive care COVID patients receiving standard care died. The new drugs reduced that by a quarter, to 27%, when given to patients within 24 of them entering intensive care.



Prof Stephen Powis, NHS national medi-

cal director, said: "The fact there is now another drug that can help to reduce mortality for patients with Covid-19 is hugely welcome news and another positive development in the continued fight against the virus."

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said: "The UK has proven time and time again it is at the very forefront of identifying and providing the most promising, innovative treatments for its patients."

"Today's results are yet another landmark development in finding a way out of this pandemic and, when added to the armoury of vaccines and treatments already being rolled out, will play a significant role in defeating this virus."

The drugs dampen down inflammation, which can go into overdrive in Covid patients and cause damage to the lungs and other organs. Doctors are being advised to give them to any Covid patient who, despite receiving dexamethasone, is deteriorating and needs intensive care.

Tocilizumab and sarilumab have already been added to the government's export restriction list, which bans companies from buying medicines meant for UK patients and selling them on for a higher price in another country. The research findings have not yet been peer reviewed or published in a medical journal (Courtesy <https://www.bbc.com/>)

Related

Early Plasma Trial Promising In Adults 65+ With Milder COVID-19 — *NNT* of 7 to prevent one case of severe illness in Argentine trial*

(NNT is a simple statistical concept called the "Number-Needed-to-Treat", or for short the 'NNT'. The NNT offers a measurement of the impact of a medicine or therapy by estimating the number of patients that need to be treated in order to have an impact on one person. The concept is statistical, but intuitive, for we know that not everyone is helped by a medicine or intervention — some benefit, some are harmed, and some are unaffected. The NNT tells us how many of each.)



Older adults hospitalized with milder COVID-19 who received convalescent plasma showed lower risk of developing severe respiratory disease versus patients who received placebo, a randomized trial found. In an intention-to-treat analysis, severe respiratory disease occurred in 16% of COVID-19 patients ages 65 and older receiving convalescent plasma within 72 hours after symptom onset versus 31% of patients receiving placebo (relative risk 0.52, 95% CI 0.29-0.94, P=0.03), reported Fernando Polack, MD, of Fundación INFANT-COVID-19 Group in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and colleagues, in the New England Journal of Medicine.

However, the trial was stopped early at about three-quarters of its projected sample size due to a decline in COVID-19 cases in the region, the authors noted. Evidence for convalescent plasma in COVID-19 has been conflicting from the beginning. Some observational studies showed promise, while more recent research found no benefit among patients with severe COVID-19. But previous studies may have administered them too late, as authors noted antibodies in plasma "must be administered soon after infection in order to be effective." The FDA authorized its use in hospitalized COVID-19 patients in August.

Polack and colleagues pointed up how their trial differed from others: it focused on older adults, who are most affected by the pandemic, and convalescent plasma was given "in a mild stage" with the aim of preventing progression.

"Our primary endpoint" -- severe respiratory illness -- "was an enrollment criterion in previous studies," the group noted.

Patients were enrolled in Argentina from June 4 to Oct. 25. They included patients ages 65-74 with at least one comorbidity, and patients ages 75 and older irrespective of pre-existing conditions. They had tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 and had symp-

toms including fever, unexplained sweating or chills and dry cough for less than 48 hours. Severe respiratory disease was defined as respiration at 30 breaths per minute or more or oxygen saturation of less than 93% on ambient air. They were assessed from 12 hours after infusion to day 15 of trial participation.



Overall, 160 patients underwent randomization. Mean age was 77, and 62% were women. A little more than half were 75 or older. Most patients had pre-existing conditions, with over two-thirds of both groups being treated for hypertension. An intention-to-treat analysis found severe respiratory disease developed in 13 of 80 patients in the intervention group and 25 of 80 in the placebo group, for a relative risk reduction of 48% and a number needed to treat of 7 to avert one episode of severe respiratory disease.

There were no solicited adverse events observed. Four convalescent plasma recipients had life-threatening respiratory disease. Two patients in the intervention group and four patients in the placebo group died.

Polack's group noted that while the trial "lacked the statistical power to discern long-term outcomes," their findings underscored "the need to return to the classic approach of treating viral infections early."

An exploratory finding of the trial was a dose-dependent IgG effect, where donated plasma with IgG titers of 1:3,200 or higher reduced severe respiratory disease by 73% and a number needed to treat of 4. Among the plasma donors in the trial, 71% with titers of 1:3,200 or higher were previously hospitalized.

"Super donors" with IgG titers of 1:12,800 or higher and perhaps immunized persons in the future could contribute to build a therapeutic arsenal," Polack and colleagues wrote. (Courtesy [medpagetoday.com](https://www.medpagetoday.com))

Moderna Vaccine May Work For 'A Couple Of Years'



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

Jan. 8, 2021 -- The Moderna vaccine -- one of two vaccines now being distributed in the United States -- will "potentially" provide protection against COVID-19 for several years, the biotech company's CEO said, according to Reuters. But Stephane Bancel said the Massachusetts-based Moderna will have to conduct more research to be definitive about how long the vaccine will work. Because coronavirus vaccines are new, health experts aren't sure how long they'll be effective. "The nightmare scenario that was described in the media in the spring with a vaccine only working a month or two is, I think, out of the window," Bancel said at an event organized by the Franco-German financial services group Oddo BHF. "The antibody decay generated by the vaccine in humans goes down very slowly (...) We believe there will be protection potentially for a couple of years." Bancel went on to predict Moderna would soon prove its vaccine would work against coronavirus variants found in the United Kingdom and other nations, Reuters said. The U.S. government approved the Moderna vaccine for distribution in the United States on Dec. 17, one week after approving the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. Both are now being administered in the United States and the Moderna vaccine was recently approved by the European Com-

mission. Moderna and Pfizer both use two shots of messenger RNA to create an immune response against the coronavirus. The shots are given about two weeks apart.



Moderna said its vaccine had proven to be 94.1% effective, and 100% effective in severe cases of COVID-19. Pfizer says its vaccine has a similar efficacy, 95%.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has agreed to purchase 200 million doses of Moderna's vaccine and could purchase more.

Despite increasing coronavirus case counts and deaths, distribution of the coronavirus vaccine has lagged in the United States. The CDC says 17.2 million doses have been distributed to the states as of Dec. 6, but only 5.3 million doses have been administered.

Vaccines being produced by AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson are still in

clinical trials.

Related

Vaccines have protected us from deadly pathogens for millennia

Why Vaccines Are Critical To Keeping Diseases At Bay



Scientists around the world are racing to develop a vaccine for the novel coronavirus that has killed tens of thousands of people since late December. Dozens of companies and institutions are leading the charge at a record pace, and some already have begun the first phase of clinical trials. Yet researchers continue to warn that it could take at least a year to 18 months before a vaccine is ready for public use—a long time to wait for what many see as the best hope to stem the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes COVID-19.

Most vaccines don't cure diseases; they prevent you from getting infected in the first place. Vaccines contain the same germ (or part of a germ) that causes a disease, but in a killed or weakened state so that it doesn't actually make you sick. The immune system learns about the pathogen, stores information about it, and produces antibodies against it so that the next time it appears, the body can fight it off.

Vaccines have been around only for a couple hundred years, but the concept of inoculating ourselves against diseases has a long history.

The invention of vaccines

Smallpox was one of the early scourges of humankind—and the first and only one to be eradicated with the use of a vaccine. By 430 B.C., humans had figured out that people who survived smallpox developed an immunity to it. Sometime over the next 2,000 years—some say as early as 200 B.C.—people learned how to inoculate themselves against it. Early accounts from China and India in-

dicating that people fought the deadly disease using a technique called variolation, which involved grinding up smallpox scabs and deliberately infecting someone with it by blowing it up a nostril or scratching it into their skin. Variolation caused a milder form of the disease and was far from perfect: Not only was there still a 2 to 3 percent fatality rate, but the infected could pass on smallpox. Still, by the early 18th century, the technique had become popular in Europe and the Americas.



In 1796, an English doctor named Edward Jenner revolutionized the way we approach diseases like smallpox. He showed that inoculation using a weakened strain of cowpox—a mild zoonotic disease that at the time typically transferred from cattle to humans—could also protect against smallpox. During the next several decades, Jenner's vaccination method gradually replaced variolation. Thanks to that discovery and developments in the ensuing years, smallpox began to fade. In 1980, nearly 200 years later, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared it eradicated.

Jenner's breakthrough paved the way for vaccines that today prevent widespread epidemics of a variety of diseases, including influenza, measles, polio, rabies, tetanus, typhoid, yellow fever, and cervical cancer.

How vaccines work

Your body's immune system is designed to seek and destroy invading pathogens—but it's not always easy, and pathogens can be clever. For example, the flu virus disguises itself as it enters your body and then begins to replicate before your immune system realizes that it's there. Vaccines give your immune system a leg up in the fight by teaching it how to quickly recognize a pathogen. There are several different types of vac-

cines, but they all essentially serve to introduce a germ or part of a germ into your body in a way that can't make you sick—though it may cause minor symptoms such as fever as your body builds immunity. Some vaccines use the entire pathogen, but in a killed or weakened state; some use only the parts of the organism that alert the immune system; some use a toxin made by the germ, and some rely on the pathogen's genetic material.

When you receive a vaccine, the germ sends up an alert to your immune system to start producing antibodies to fight it. Once your immune system has beaten the pathogen, it knows how to quickly destroy it. When you're exposed to the real thing, your body recognizes the bug and can fight off the infection before it begins.



Sometimes that immunity from a vaccine can last for years or even the rest of your life, while other vaccines require boosters at regular intervals. All adults and children need the influenza vaccine every year to prevent infection against the viral strains likely to be common that season.

Misinformation and waning trust in science and government has spurred an anti-vaccine movement among those who question their safety. Yet vaccines remain as crucial as ever to keeping dangerous diseases such as measles and polio at bay. The WHO estimates that vaccines save two million to three million lives each year.

Many are now pinning their hopes on a vaccine to do the same for the novel coronavirus. But it's too soon to say when that might be—or what type of vaccine will be most effective against the coronavirus that continues to spread around the world. (Courtesy [webmd.com](https://www.webmd.com) and <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/>)