

1. Researchers in Australia have found that an anti-parasitic drug can kill COVID-19 in a lab.

In a study published Friday, scientists at Monash University in Melbourne say one dose of Ivermectin, which is available around the world, was found to halt SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) from growing in cell culture within 48 hours.

"We found that even a single dose could essentially remove all viral RNA by 48 hours and that even at 24 hours there was a really significant reduction in it," said study leader Kylie Wagstaff.

She noted that the mechanism by which Ivermectin worked on the virus was unknown yet, but based on how it interacted with other viruses, the drug probably stopped the virus "dampening down" the host cells' ability to clear it.

The next step is for scientists to determine whether it could safely work for humans.

"Ivermectin is very widely used and seen as a safe drug," Wagstaff said, "We need to figure out now whether the dosage you can use it at in humans will be effective — that's the next step.

"In times when we're having a global pandemic and there isn't an approved treatment, if we had a compound that was already available around the world then that might help people sooner. Realistically it's going to be a while before a vaccine is broadly available."

Ivermectin is an FDA-approved anti-parasitic drug also shown to be effective in vitro against viruses including HIV, dengue and influenza.

2. The health authorities voiced concern Monday over a weakening in the public's participation in the government's social distancing campaign aimed at containing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, with outdoor crowds being seen frequently over the weekend.

The government warned the public about lowering their guard against the coronavirus, noting that further mass infections in Seoul and the surrounding areas could lead to a more serious public health crisis similar to those seen in Europe and the United States.

According to the Central Disaster and Safety

Countermeasures Headquarters, there was a 20 percent increase in the movement of people going outside for leisure purposes Saturday and Sunday, compared to the end of February.

The government has analyzed people's movements utilizing statistical information collected by SK Telecom's base stations.

Many people still gathered at churches to participate in worship services, while others visited parks or streets lined with trees sporting spring blossoms. Young people gathered at nightclubs, although the government announced Saturday that it was extending its social distancing campaign for another two weeks.

"Despite the government's plea to maintain a high-level of physical distancing, people's participation in the campaign has weakened for the past two weeks as an increasing number have felt mental fatigue over the prolonged practice," Vice Health Minister Kim Gang-lip said during a briefing.

According to Daegu, more than 200 churches pushed ahead with indoor Sunday services, with more than 12,000 people attending them.

In North Chungcheong Province, 730 churches held services, despite the government recommendation to conduct them online.

Many visitors were also seen near Yunjung-no, the cherry blossom tree-lined street behind the National Assembly on Yeouido, although Yeongdeungpo-gu Office closed it off due to public health concerns.

Kim said the data showed that the number of visitors to Yeouido, the Han River and Mount Nam where cherry blossom trees were in full bloom increased rapidly at 4 p.m. Sunday.

"Korea could have seen better results in its fight against COVID-19 if people had participated in social distancing more actively," Kim said.

The Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) confirmed 47 new cases and three more deaths, Sunday, bringing the nation's total infections to 10,284, and the death toll to 186.

Infection clusters in Seoul and surrounding areas, as well as cases of foreign origin have continued to emerge.

Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun once again asked people to continue with a high-level physical distancing, saying, "Physical distancing is a consideration for others and the most effective way to protect yourself."

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Justice said it had deported a Taiwanese woman late Sunday in accordance with the government's zero-tolerance policy against quarantine violators, as she refused to stay at a quarantine facility.

According to the ministry, the woman refused to pay the cost for staying in the government-designated facility.

The government is placing all new arrivals in mandatory self-quarantine at their homes or government-designated facilities, starting Wednesday. The daily cost at the facilities is around 100,000 won (\$81).

3. The government has decided to share anonymous COVID-19 patient data with domestic and international researchers as the highly contagious virus pandemic is straining health systems worldwide, according to the

president of the Health Insurance Review and Assessment Service (HIRA).

"The novel coronavirus is threatening the livelihood and safety of global citizens, and social and economic activities have been hit hard in many countries. Yet there is little evidence of real-world clinical data available for physicians or policymakers," said HIRA President Kim Seung-taek.

The agency plans to jointly host #OpenData4Covid19 project, a global research collaboration on COVID-19 with the Ministry of Health and Welfare.

As of April 1, nearly 861,000 people have been confirmed with COVID-19 from 200 countries, and the total death toll has reached 42,369 globally. The virus pandemic is expected to continue to spread further for the time being.

The special decision by HIRA and the health ministry has therefore been made to tackle this situation. The data sets are collected and processed promptly, thanks to the Korean National Health Insurance System, which covers the entire population.

The international cooperative research network is the

first of its kind where real-time COVID-19 data will be collected and made publicly available to researchers worldwide.

"We hope that researchers from home and abroad join us and actively engage in producing effective measures to combat the virus," Kim said.

The HIRA also said it wants domestic and foreign public institutions, governments, hospitals and health insurance corporations in other countries to join the open data initiative.

The object of COVID-19 International Research is to share the HIRA's patient data to help humanity as a whole overcome the disease and produce effective policy enforcement.

"Ahead of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, we hope that the technology for big data analysis will create new value in the health and medical sectors ... and all humankind can enjoy the benefits," Kim said.

4. Live updates: China reports no new coronavirus deaths, as New York figures offer cautious hope; Boris Johnson remains in ICU.

Trump says Americans are praying for Boris Johnson

President Trump said on April 6 that Americans are praying for British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who was taken into intensive care with covid-19.

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China reported no new coronavirus deaths Tuesday for the first time since it began reporting numbers in January, offering hope for other nations still grappling with the devastating pandemic.

The virus has killed more than 10,500 people in the United States, nearly half of them in New York. But Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo (D) said Monday that the daily death toll fell under 600 for two days in a row, suggesting a “possible flattening of the curve,” though the hospital system remains overwhelmed. In Britain, Prime Minister Boris Johnson remained in intensive care with covid-19 after his condition worsened.

Meanwhile, legal battles erupted over Wisconsin’s Tuesday presidential primary and local elections, which Gov. Tony Evers (D) tried to postpone, citing the threat

of coronavirus.

Here are some significant developments:

The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday blocked a plan to extend mail-in ballot deadlines in Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Supreme Court overturned the governor's calls for Tuesday's vote to be postponed until June, leaving voters and poll workers scrambling hours before voting is now set to take place.

A survey of hospitals across the country showed health-care workers are facing shortages of tests, masks, face shields, ventilators and staff. President Trump rejected the results of the report, which was compiled by the Inspector General of Health and Human Services, suggesting it was political.

China announced 32 new cases, all of them imported, but no new deaths for the first time since it began reporting figures in January.

Italy announced 3,599 new coronavirus cases on Monday, its lowest daily increase in around three weeks. Spain confirmed 4,273 new cases, suggesting a downward trend in two of Europe's hardest-hit countries.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) told fellow Democratic lawmakers Monday that the next coronavirus relief bill could “easily” pass \$1 trillion in cost. Congressional leaders and the White House are converging on the need for a new assistance package.