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BUSINESS GROUP ON HEALTH

COVID-19 Update

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China – COVID Success Story?

USA vs China



- 95+M cases
- 1 in 3 residents have been infected
- 1,046,145 deaths
- 1 in 309 residents have died
- 67% Primary course of vaccine; 33% had 1 or more boosters



7-day rolling average. Due to limited testing, the number of confirmed cases is lower than the true number of infections.



- 972K cases
- 1 in 1,438 residents have been infected
- 5,226 deaths
- 1 in 267,454 residents have died
- 91% Primary course of vaccine; 57% had 1 or more booster

Zero-COVID Policy

- Aim of controlling and eradication of COVID
- Mass testing to identify cases
- Isolation of cases and quarantining of contacts
- Restricting travel and activities
- COVID pass (negative test)
- Masks
- Encouraging vaccinations
- Transitioned from whole city lockdown to local lockdowns of targeted areas when possible





Zero-COVID Policy

- Successes:
 - Very low case rates, hospitalizations and deaths compared to the rest of the world
 - Proven time and time again that outbreaks can be controlled even with the more challenging Omicron variants
 - Built a machinery that can test half a billion people every 48 hours
 - Mobilization of healthcare resources for testing, isolation and quarantine
- Challenges:
 - Significant social impact resulting in increasing pushback from the general population
 - Today 65+M people are in lockdown 222 cites with cases
 - Significant economic impact –
 - Decreased growth projections (potentially long term)
 - \circ $\,$ 7% drop in currency against the US\$ this year $\,$
 - Decrease in manufacturing output
 - Cost of implementing the testing, isolation and quarantine approaches





What are the potential future scenarios for China?



Option 1 – Maintain Zero-COVID policy

- Expected to be maintained until 2023 with some saying it could last longer
- Two significant challenges to this strategy







Option 2 – Transition to a 'live with COVID' Strategy

- Most of the world now transitioning to a 'live with COVID' strategy due to:
 - Effective vaccines and new bivalent boosters
 - High levels of community immunity from vaccines and infections
 - Treatments that mitigate most severe outcomes
 - Pandemic fatigue
- For China this is a challenging proposition due to:
 - Less effective vaccines
 - High numbers of COVID naïve who are at risk of severe disease
 - Significant case numbers 100++ M new cases
 - Massive overload of healthcare system
 - Million ++ deaths



New vaccine

- China recently approved a new vaccine which is inhaled through the nose and mouth as an aerosolized mist
- These mucosal vaccines promote an immune responses where SARS-CoV-2 first enters the body which could (potentially) prevent even mild cases of illness and block transmission to other people
- Vaccines that produce sterilizing immunity would be game changing for the pandemic:
 - 100+ in development
 - EUA approvals for locally developed inhaled vaccines in China, Russia, India and Iran
- Limited data has been published:
 - Phase 2 clinical trials demonstrated increased antibody response versus injected vaccine
 - Phase 3 clinical trials performed but data not yet shared/published



If the new inhaled vaccine provides sterilizing immunity, then China's COVID exit strategy could be:



• If it worked – few cases, fewer hospitalizations and fewer deaths

BUT:

- Sterilization immunity not yet proven
- Time to make and vaccinated 1+B people may take longer that economy or people can stand
- Virus may change yet again and evade vaccine induced immunity!



Updated Bi-valent Boosters

- BA.4 and BA.5 the variant causing the most cases in the US
- Updated boosters target original SARS-CoV2, and a unique component of the spike protein found in BA.4 and BA.5
 - Increased immune response that is broader and *may* last longer that mono-valent booster
 - Safety similar to existing vaccines
- Who is eligible:
 - Pfizer 12 and older; Moderna 18 and older
 - At least 2 months since last dose (primary course or booster)



Updated Bi-valent Boosters – Common questions

- Can you get an updated bi-valent booster if I have just had COVID?
- Can I mix and match the boosters?
- What are the side-effects of the updated boosters like?
- I am immunocompromised can I get the updated booster?
- I am on Evusheld can I get the updated booster?
- When will the updated boosters be available for under 12's?
- Can I get my flu shot at the same time as my COVID Booster?





- Flu season usually starts in December through Q1 the following year
- Flu vaccine's effectiveness drops about 8-11% per month
- 4 months of great protection
- Vaccinate now, October or November?



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Questions

Upcoming NEBGH virtual events:

- Sept. 21 Financial Wellness, Mental Health and Economic Uncertainty: How Employers Can Help
- Sept. 26 Monday Bi-Weekly COVID-19 Update w/ Dr. Mark
- Sept. 27 Global Benefits and Employee Wellbeing
- Oct. 6 Up and Comers with Deb Mackin