**UK government Covid19 press conference 6 April 2020**

**Jeremy Hoad**

(usual caveats apply to this live transcript / commentary)

**Attending**

Dominic Raab, Foreign Secretary

Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer

Angela McLean, Depouty Chief Scientific Adviser

**Figures**

208.837 tested

51,608 positive

17,9111 hospitalised

5,373 dead

(no number given for last 24 hour deaths)

**Raab**

Strategy aimed at reducing spread of virus

We have taken right measures at the right moment

We have expanded capacity of NHS

Instructing people to stay at home to save lives

Figures a reminder of why people must follow government guidance

PM admitted on advice of doctor as a precautionary step

PM had comfortable night

PM continues to lead the government

Government remains united

Gove has explained over last week how we are meeting demand for ventilators and equipment

Sharma has explained business support

Seeking international support and manufacturing

Bringing UK nationals home

200k returned from Spain on commercial flights

13k Egypt

8k Indonesia

2k from 7 other countries

1,550 from cruise ships

Doing everything we can to keep international airpots open and commercial flights running

£75m allocated

Every arm of government is doing everything it can to defeat the virus.

Mention of the Queen

PM & Raab want to thank NHS staff for their truly heroic work

**McLean**

Slide

transport change reduced significantly

Slide

Growth non hospital cases show what we are doing IS working

Slide

hospital admissions across UK

steady rise to beginning of April but too soon to see effects of measures from 23/3

Slide

Global comparisons of very sad deaths from Covid

We expect this number to keep rising for some time

**Questions**

If PM is ill enough to be in hospital how can he be well enough to run the country? Shouldn't he step back to recover?

Raab - admitted for tests as precaution only.

Comfortable night in St Thomas'

We will pull together to defeat the virus

What about changing measures or exit strategy?

McLean - need good data before changing anything.

We smeed to know how well current restrictions are working before we can say anything sensible about what happens next.

Raab - overriding focus to get over the peak right now.

Africa Minister James Duderidge urged PM to rest up. Do you agree, Raab?

Raab - PM is in charge but will continue to take advice.

PM is in full charge at full throttle.

Entering third week of lockdown. Will Whitty be advising measures kept?

Whitty - need to get to the stage we are confident we are beyond the peak before we have any discussio0n about the next stages.

We don't know we know for certain peak will be at the end of this week.

Raab - govt no.1 priority to get beyond the peak

Normal advice when someone has been as unwell as the PM is to rest. Is he taking too much of a risk?

Raab - PM has taken doctors' advice

Damage from prolonged lockdown will be extensive so what is the govt strategy. Can we do anything until we have a system of mass testing?

Why not explain what the plan is to get out of lockdown?

Raab - we want to focus on current restrictions

we don't want to confuse the message we have now until we are past the peak.

Whitty - nest stage planning is very complicated including consideration of testing and new drugs, wider social impacts.

Direct effect of deaths

Indirect effects if NHS was overwhelmed

Action to minimise both of these.

Will be effect of postponing some healthcare.

Long term health impact of deferrals of care particularly for those in lower socio-economic groups.

McLean - we can only plan based on data that we can start to be collecting now.

(all of this is unconvincing and betrays the fact the government's lockdown approach is illogical and they have no idea how to get out of the position they have put us in to be consistent with their own logic of why we are in lockdown)

How does number of ITU patients in London compare to what was planned?

Whitty - response from public on social distancing and NHS staff to build up number of beds has ensured we have room to spare. We would like to maintain some headroom at any given time.

Raab - regional distribution of need also.

We are not remotely complacent

PM condition - have you spoken to him and have you taken over any security responsibilities? And why was PM recommended to go into hospital? How is he sick enough to be in hospital but not too sick to avoid running the country. Have you (Raab) taken over any security role from PM?

Raab - I spoke to him at weekend and won't comment on security matters.

Whitty - I did not recommended hospitalisation. This is a better for PM's medical advisers.

I won't comment on any specific individual. Would be completely inappropriate for me to comment.

(This seems like bureaucratic evasion and avoidance of answering the key questions about the PM people are asking)

No antibody tests are good enough yet so at what stage will mass home testing be used / needed?

Whitty - antibody tests useful at a later stage. Few people will have antibodies at the moment. 21-28 days from infection make these tests more effective.

New disease. No knowledge at the end of January. Confident antibody tests will be developed. Tests will continue to improve particularly on dipstick side. Will become more accurate. Situation in few weeks or months will be different.

If country and PM needs it do you feel ready to take charge, Raab?

Raab - PM is in charge and giving directions as required. I'm not going to get into any hypotheticals.

Have you spoken to PM today, Raab?

Raab - spoke to him yesterday.

Exit strategy?

Raab - focus on current requirements.

(This is getting tedious. People need to know the government has a plan for ending the restrictions it has forced on people)

Should individuals who have been hospitalised continue to work from their hospital bed in your medical opinion, Whitty?

Whitty - general point patients of mine, some who are capable, others are not, that is an individual conversation.

Small businesses waiting on advice on when rates relief and other support coming.

Only 1k Business Loans Scheme awarded - are banks nervous and avoiding giving loans through the government's scheme?

Raab - Chancellor already announced £330 bn package.

Encourage banks to support businesses.

(avoided question)

Can you do anything to ensure support is rolled out?

Raab - We want to ensure Treasury team can ensure everything can be done.

(again, avoided question)

Raab ended and left abruptly.