**UK government Covid19 press conference 10 April 2020**

**Jeremy Hoad**

(usual caveats apply to this live transcript / commentary)

**Attending**

Matt Hancock, Health Secretary

Ruth May, Chief Nursing Officer

Jonathan Van-Tam, Deputy Chief Medical Officer

(press conference now starts with warning video)

**Figures**

19,116 tested

5,706 positive

19,304 hospitalised

8,958 dead

980 increase in last 24 hours

**Hancock**

Our plan is protect life and protect the NHS

To ensure NHS always has more capacity than needed

Easter will be another test of the nation’s resolve

However warm the weather, however tempting your local beach or park. We need everyone to stay at home

NHS staff are battling day and night to keep desperately sick people breathing and THEY need YOU to stay at home

(Could do without the Kitchener propaganda type language)

Happy to report PM’s condition continues to improve

He wants to personally thank the clinical team at St Thomas’ for incredible care he has received

His thoughts are with everyone who has been affected by this terrible disease

NHS staff have given the PM the same high quality care in the same way they would give anybody in the country the best care possible

Something to be proud of in our country

Never forget that behind every number is a name, a person, a family member

Goal of 100k tests by end April

Capacity for all key NHS and social care staff to get tests

15 drive through test centres

UK life sciences industry answering call to arms

First megalab opened in Milton Keynes, others to follow

Going to talk about PPE

Goal is everyone in a critical role must get the PPE they need

NHS and caqre staff protect us every day we owe it to them to protect them

Huge international demand

Global squeeze on supply

Some countries have imposed export bans

High demand for PPE

Everyone should use equipment they need in line with guidelines, no more, no less

Distribution challenges

233 trusts normally supplied

58,000 locations now need PPE

Challenges over supply and distribution being overcome

PPE plan

1 clear guidance on who needs it, when

Enough to go round only if people follow guidance

Only using it when clinical need

Don’t use more than needed

Updated guidance published last week

Guidance also clear where PPE is NOT needed

In most situations washing hands and social. Distancing. Is the best way to protect yourself as well as staying at. Home

2 distribution

Herculean logistical effort

NHS, armed forces and private businesses brought together

Over 742m pieces of PPE delicered to frontline

Have reached hospitals

24/7 hotline

Hospitals have 72 hour priority deliveries to be daily next week

Over next 3 weeks online portal for primary and social care to request PPE from central source

Enormous operational complexity

Tribute to. All making this happen

We will do. Everything we possibly can

3 future supply

Using. PPE on unprecendented scale

PPE soucing. Unit securing supply. Lines from across the world

Buying directly from manufacturers

Have global shopping list and standards

Before crisis we did not have a domestic production

Burberry, rolls Royce, ineos, Diageo all name checked

We want to hear. From you so we can make this kit here in Britian to keep people safe

Even if you’re not directly involved everyone can play your part – stay at home

Spreading the virus today risks lives tomorrow

Do it for the NHS, do it for people you love

Thank you to everyone doing your bit as part of the national effort

**May**

Offered personal wishes to PM

Bank Holiday like no other I can remember

Not possible to do normal things

Staying at home is saving lives

Remember sacrifices others are making (various NHS staff referenced)

Thanks on behalf of NHS staff to key workers who have allowed NHS staff to keep working

Dedicated, skilled professional staff continue to work

NHS staff are now among the victims

The loss. Of our own is heart-breaking

NHS is a family, we feel their loss deeply

Condolences offered

Everyone can help NHS staff by staying athome

30,000 beds freed up before new Nightingale hospitals

Sunderland and Exeter will also have Nightingale hospitals

This is the greatest challenge the NHS has ever faced

Amid dark news each day brings we see extraordinary support from people such as clapping and rainbows in windows – means a great deal to me and colleagues

Single greatest thing you can do to say thank you is to follow the advice

This is a long weekend we need you to stay at. Home

**Van-Tam**

Slide

Transport use

Public transport use has stayed at. Low levels

Please just keep going with this, it’s not over

We have to keep pushing as a nation to maintain social distancing

Slide

New UK cases

Broad trend -have been in an increase phase

Now at a high. Level, numbers varying day to day but at high level

this is not over

Slide

People in hospital beds

Steady increase

Curve is bending

Impossible to say we have peaked but curve is beginning to bend and your hard work is beginning to pay off

This is not over, it needs to continue

Slide

Critical care

London has been epicentre

Trend overall

Some signs curve beginning to bend

Social distancing push has to continue

Slide

Global death comparison

UK continues to be broadly in line with other countries

Still a dangerous situation

**Questions**

Repeated claims to. Get PPE to health and social care workers – are you acknowledging previous plans were not sufficient? What guarantees people will be made to feel safe with the right equipment in the future?

Hancock – herculean task, 742m pieces of equipment delivered

Critical thing is that people use PPE as the precious resource it is

Team trying to deliver on this have put in enormous effort

Clearly huge task ahead to make sure people who need it get it

Brought clarity to how PPE should be used and increased production and sourcing and get more suppliers

Constant effort to get PPE to frontline

Doing everything in our power to get PPE to frontline

Ensure place to go for people to call for help

(didn’t really address the question as to why the delays in PPE have been. So sever and so prolonged in the UK)

May – PPE important to be safe

I know and hear this is a challenge

Collectively want to get PPE where it is needed when

Refresher training being undertaken for staff

Good news PM health improving but does he accept he can’t return soon and will lockdown changes be announced in his absence? Further 3 week lockdown?

Hancock - PM recovering

Fact PM was so ill demonstrates how serious this disease is

(can we get off this idea that because EVEN the PM has been infected this shows this is serious?)

Govt functioning efficiently and effectively in PM absence

Raab said yesterday SAGE to meet next week

The way we make these decisions is working well in context of strategy PM set out

(avoided answering specifically, repeated previous generalisations)

Why is the UK continuing to allow people to enter the country without people being tested or entering quarantine from hotspots? What measures are being put in place?

Face masks? UK is becoming an outlier on advice. Why different approach?

Hancock – answer to both questions is to follow the science

We have done this all the way along

(it is obvious that is not the case if the logic / rhetoric being used now is to stop spread, prevent hospitalisations and prevent deaths then that would have held true weeks before the govt implemented social distancing and lockdown measures)

Science we followed on international travel has been borne out by events

Italy and USA closed borders but they still had severe impacts

(didn’t really answer the question directly on why people still coming into the UK from hotspots weren’t being dealt with differently to protect us)

Face masks – we are following WHO advice – face masks should be saved for those in health and social care for those who need them

Van-Tam – on closing borders scientists have been clear that that would not work to stop coronavirus entering UK

Even later we will go to low levels of transmission, not to zero so new cases won’t be imported by travellers to a zero-infection area

(that seems to contradict the previous contact tracing and quarantine approach taken)

Face masks vexed and emotive issue, have kept this under repeated scientific review

There isn’t the evidence base to merit widespread public use of face masks at this point

If science changes we will change

How many frontline NHS workers have died?

When a healthcare worker dies is there an investigatory process to make sure it doesn’t happen again?

May – any death is a tragic one and heart-breaking

We do have numbers of NHS deaths but would be inappropriate right now to go into this and list them and number them, permission from all families isn’t there yet

Inappropriate to comment. On individual deaths

(answer missed / avoided the point question was not asking for individual people to be listed or identified. In any case individuals have been referenced previously. Point about numbers of deaths. For NHS / healthcare workers who have died essentially ignored)

Economists predict 14% drop in GDP what would impact of this be outside Covid19 deaths?

Hancock – elements include deaths that occur because NHS is overrun but this has not happened so far due to action taken to increase capacity

Impact of delaying activity will impact

Economic impact

Do not have yet established impact of impact of economy on health of the nation but piece of work working on jointly with Chancellor

Need to take into account entire impact on health of country including indirectly through economic impact

Will be at the heart of when we make judgements in the future

Position now continues to be stay at home to save lives

Exiting govt modelling being reported of 150,000 deaths related to impact of Covid19?

Hancock – I don’t recognise that figure, not correct

When you see people breaking social distancing how does that make you feel?

When relaxing restrictions comes what are numeric targets for case loads, fatality rates etc before you advise govt to relax measures?

Hancock – not that we don’t have data but information shows we are not there yet eg flattening of curves

May – very very frustrating to see people not doing social distancing

Still occasions where NHS colleagues are getting abuse for driving off to work

Our nurses and NHS staff need to get to work unhindered

Van-Tam – understand everyone wants a number or figure to look out for to indicate we are beating this for good but advice (from SAGE) is complicated and will look at hospital admissions, tests, ICU and deaths all indicators need to be taken into account to ensure confidence. In consistency of change

Currently figures are bouncing around a bit which is entirely normal

I’m itching to give you one thing to look for I just can’t, it’s just too soon and a more complicated judgement based on a variety of indicators

What is meant by “the peak”?

Van-Tam – indicators are part of a constant flow at the moment. (explanation of flows into hospital, ICU admissions, variable timings)

Peak of. Each of these indices will be different and need to have a thorough understanding of all of these before signalling to govt what might happen next on social distancing

How are you going to get from 19k to 100k tests by end of the month?

Hancock – 4 megalabs coming onstream, first 3 in operation, 4th by end of month

Part of national effort

Huge number of offers to turn facilities into testing faciulities including facilities and equipment we didn’t know about

Megalabs – many staffed by volunteers super specialised in what we need

Met with many of them yesterday, inspiring to see

Working 24/7 to hit 100k target, we are on track

Doctors telling us oxygen is being rationed, what is being done to ensure supply?

Van-Tam – disease is unlike anything I have seen in my 3 decades in medicine

Requirement for people to have oxygen at these levels is unprecedented

Logistic and engineering challenge to create thousands of ICU beds and secure oxygen supplies

Enormous logistic work 24/7 to keep hospitals supplied

Yes, we have seen one or two reports where things have gone wrong with oxygen supply

We have to learn as we go along

Will see isolated incidents as we go along

Concern about oxygen for palliative care patients?

Hancock – in all cases there has been available ventilated oxygen to treat people who needed it and we have 2,000 spare bed capacity, going up faster than need

There is enough capacity in NHS to look after you

Important to not let infections increase

Whether someone should be put onto ventilator is on clinical need basis, not a blanket position

DNR notices are a standard part of any healthcare system but there is no link between needs of a patient and capacity to meet those needs

People must stay at home to ensure capacity stays ahead of demand

May – clinicians making these sorts of decisions all the time

Heard about vital importance of staying at home and social distancing if you do need to go to work yet meetings continue to be held by you with 10-20 people. NHS officials dialling into these meetings have expressed concerns about the message this sends – will you stop holding meeting in that way? Or can’t you meet your own rules?

Hancock – I work from home when I can and have meetings on Zoom. When I come into the office I follow social distancing rules

Even podia here have been moved further apart

We follow social distancing guidelines

(deflected)

NHS hasn’t been overwhelmed but there are many choosing not to go to A&E and longer waits. Could there be aq rebound sharp substantial effect as a result of delays?

Van-Tam – because of extraordinary measures people have taken on social distancing this has prevented NHS being overwhelmed

Other emergencies will continue eg cardiac

Important message is NHS is open for business as usual

Hancock – If you need the NHS for something unrelated to Covid crisis then you should use it

Fall in self reporting chest pain, risk of stroke

Message must be loud and clear – if you have a healthcare need you must contact the NHS

We want people with other health problems especially urgent or life threatening to contact NHS

May – particularly important for pregnant women to contact you midwives

8k nurses coming back and 12k student midwives and nurses ready to come back

We are there to care for you whether it is covid or non-covid related

(government warning video shown at end as well)