

We Cannot Afford to Censor Dissenting Voices During a Pandemic - Prof Martin Kulldorff

By [Dr Martin Kulldorff](#) and [Oliver May](#)

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Now that we are allowed to meet up in groups of six outside their homes, Matt Hancock is warning us not to do anything foolish, like hug one another or breach the two metre rule. “Do it safely,” he tweeted. “Don’t blow it now”.

But in fact, the people who shouldn’t “blow it” are Boris Johnson, Sir Patrick Vallance, Chris Whitty and, yes, Matt Hancock. That is the view of Martin Kulldorff, Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School, biostatistician and epidemiologist at the Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Massachusetts, and co-author of the Great Barrington Declaration.

Professor Kulldorff has told the UK Government and its scientific advisors exactly who they should be listening to and why if they want to save lives – and it doesn’t include vaccinating the entire population, including children. He said this on Twitter on March 15th – “Thinking that everyone must be vaccinated is as scientifically flawed as thinking that nobody should. Covid vaccines are important for older high-risk people and their care-takes. Those with prior natural infection do not need it. Nor children.” – and Twitter attached a health warning to his Tweet: “This tweet is misleading. Learn why health officials recommend a vaccine for most people.” Because, of course, a 22 year-old graduate in Whiteness Studies sitting in Twitter’s HQ in Silicon Valley knows much more about infectious diseases than a Harvard professor of medicine.



Martin Kulldorff
@MartinKulldorff



No. Thinking that everyone must be vaccinated is as scientifically flawed as thinking that nobody should. COVID vaccines are important for older high-risk people, and their care-takers. Those with prior natural infection do not need it. Nor children.



This Tweet is misleading. Learn why health officials recommend a vaccine for most people.



EndemicEquilibrium @ElectraAscendin · Mar 15

Replying to @MartinKulldorff

Dr Kulldorff, do you think younger age groups and/or ppl who already had the virus need to be vaccinated? I am not an antivaxxer but I am "vaccine hesitant" about this one. It seems to be a religious mantra now that everyone MUST be vaccinated

8:44 PM · Mar 15, 2021 · Twitter Web App

Speaking to me in an exclusive interview for *Lockdown Sceptics*, Kulldorff said:

That warning was rather silly. When making unscientific claims, media often refer to 'health officials' or 'health experts' without naming those experts. I challenge Twitter to name vaccine epidemiologists who think that everyone must get the Covid vaccine, including children and those with immunity from prior infection.

Equally strange, they even concur with my tweet when they say "most people" rather than "all people". Right now, children are clearly not part of "most people", since a Covid vaccine has not yet been approved for them and we know nothing about efficacy or potential adverse reaction in children. Since most children are asymptomatic or only mildly symptomatic, it will be hard to show that the vaccine can reduce symptoms, hospitalisations or mortality in children, requiring a large sample size in countries that still has considerable disease spread.

I have worked with vaccines for a couple of decades, but Twitter clearly thinks that scientific discussions about these things are dangerous. Maybe social media is dangerous to those in power. I do hope that social media is dangerous to the lockdowns that have done so much damage to public health during this past year. The enormous collateral public health damage, which is being documented by [Collateral Global](#), is something that we will continue to live with, and die with, for many years to come. It truly is a public health tragedy of epic proportions.

The catastrophic impact of the lockdowns on public health has been exacerbated by

headlines and adverts striking the fear of god into millions, making them less likely to seek medical help for non-Covid diseases.

The media has been very reluctant to report reliable scientific and public health information about the pandemic. Instead they have broadcast unverified information such as the model predictions from Imperial College, they have spread unwarranted fear that undermine people's trust in public health and they have promoted naïve and inefficient counter measures such as lockdowns, masks and contact tracing.

While I wished that neither SAGE nor anyone else would argue against long-standing principles of public health, the media should not censor such information. During a pandemic, it is more important than ever that media can report freely. There are two major reasons for this: (i) While similar to existing coronaviruses, SARS-CoV-2 is a new virus that we are constantly learning more about and because of that, it takes time to reach scientific conclusions. With censorship it takes longer and we cannot afford that during a pandemic. (ii) In order to maintain trust in public health, it is important that any thoughts and ideas about the pandemic can be voiced, debated and either confirmed or debunked.

Kulldorff thinks that the UK Government and its scientific advisors' response to the pandemic – England is now into its third lockdown – is “incomprehensible”. Chris Whitty and Patrick Vallance initially got it right, then did a disastrous U-turn

I hope that the UK Government will quickly reverse course to avoid further unnecessary damage from both COVID-19 and the lockdowns. Why the UK Government and SAGE are not looking at public health more broadly is incomprehensible to me. Chris and Patrick got it right in early March 2020, when they argued for focused protection of high-risk older people without a destructive lockdown for children and young adults. Chris, Patrick, take advice from yourself from a little over a year ago. You can complement that with the extensive knowledge of epidemiology professors such as Sunetra Gupta and Carl Heneghan at Oxford University, Ellen Townsend at the University of Nottingham, Francois Balloux at University College London and Paul McKeigue at University of Edinburgh.

It should now be obvious to everyone that lockdowns, masks and contract tracing failed to protect older high-risk people, as it could not suppress and contain COVID-19, with far too many deaths as a result. Lockdowns are just a dragged out let-it-rip strategy. That was clear to most infectious disease epidemiologists already a year ago. The fatal logical flaw of the lockdowners has been that we must lock down because COVID-19 is dangerous. The opposite is true. Because it is a very dangerous disease among the old, they should have been properly protected through focused protection.

Instead of continuing to take advice from those who were wrong then, Boris should listen to those who were right. In the UK, you have the world's preeminent infectious disease epidemiologist in professor Sunetra Gupta. She can help implement a focused protection strategy of older high-risk individuals through vaccination and other means, while removing the lockdowns. If the Prime Minister needs the comfort of company with other politicians, get in touch with Governor Ron DeSantis in Florida.

Life in Florida, as we know, is now almost back to normal. No mask mandates, no restrictions on freedom and no incoming digital vaccine passports. But that is all set to

continue here in the UK, with, among other things, the Department for Education insisting that masks should continue to be worn in classrooms in secondary schools when kids return to school after the Easter break. As Jay Bhattacharya [pointed out](#) in an interview for *Lockdown Sceptics*, the evidence that masks protect the wearer from infection is weak and statistically insignificant – and Prof Kulldorff agrees.

In Sweden, kids are not required to wear masks in schools and schoolchildren don't have to get tested either. Schools did require that kids with e.g. a fever or a cough stay home, whether or not it was due to Covid or some other bug. If headmasters do that, they can let kids be kids and live normal lives. Inducing unwarranted fear in the public goes against one of the basic principles of public health. It has had major negative public health consequences on both physical and mental health. For example, children should not be afraid of infecting others, of playing with other children, of going to school, of playing sports, of hugging friends or their grandparents, of going outside, of seeing a mask-less person. That must stop. Period.

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The author is a staff journalist at a national newspaper group. Oliver May is a pseudonym.

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