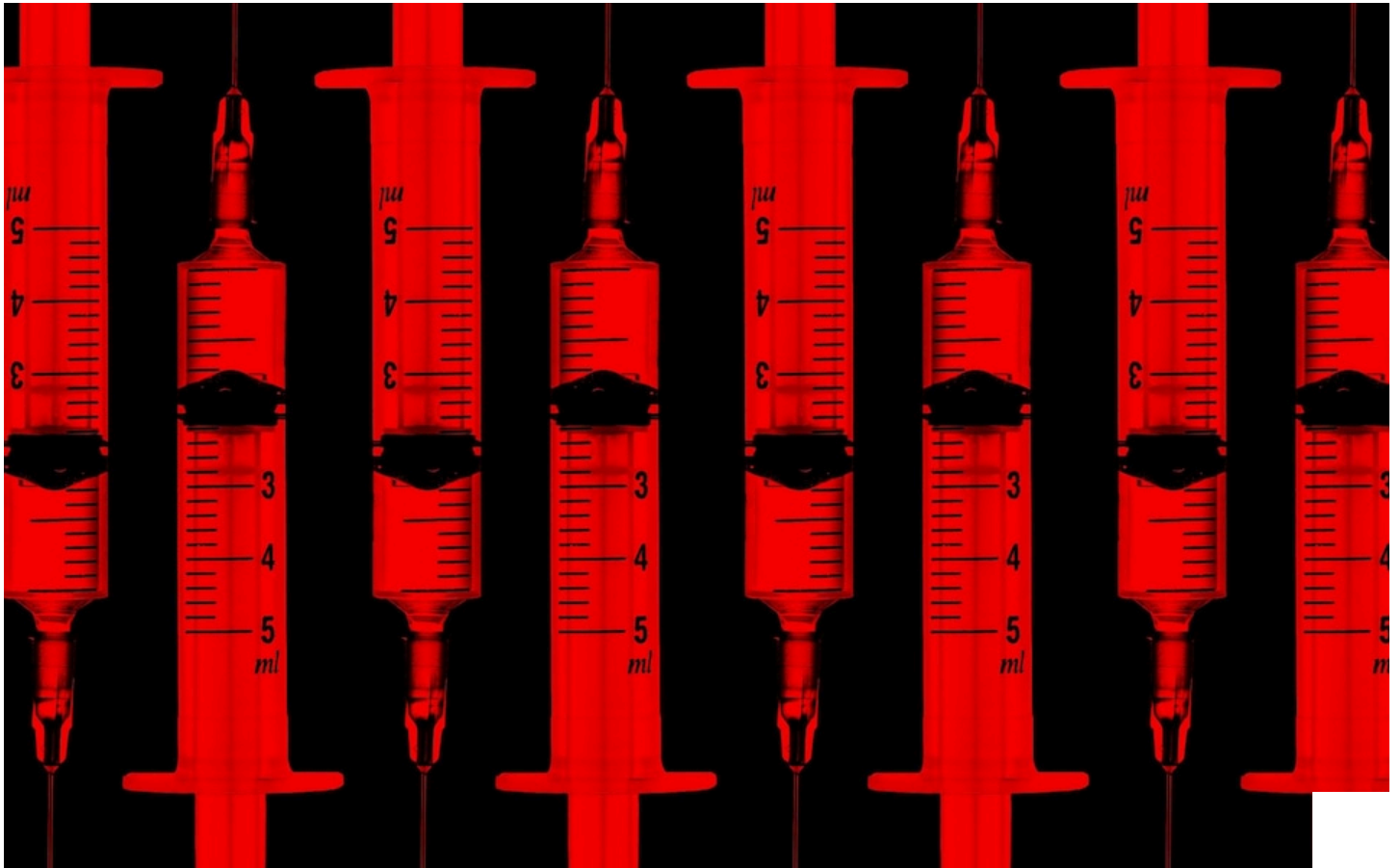


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Covid vaccines may have helped fuel rise in excess deaths

Experts call for more research into side effects and possible links to mortality rates

Sarah Knapton, SCIENCE EDITOR

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Covid vaccines could be partly to blame for the rise in excess deaths since the pandemic, scientists have suggested.

Researchers from The Netherlands analysed data from 47 Western countries and discovered there had been more than three million excess deaths since 2020, with the trend continuing despite the rollout of vaccines and containment measures.

They said the “unprecedented” figures “raised serious concerns” and called on governments to fully investigate the underlying causes, including possible vaccine harms.

Writing in the BMJ Public Health, the authors from Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, said: “Although Covid-19 vaccines were provided to guard civilians from suffering morbidity and mortality by the Covid-19 virus, suspected adverse events have been documented as well.

“Both medical professionals and citizens have reported serious injuries and deaths following vaccination to various official databases in the Western World.”

They added: “During the pandemic, it was emphasised by politicians and the media on a daily basis that every Covid-19 death mattered and every life deserved protection through containment measures and Covid-19 vaccines. In the aftermath of the pandemic, the same moral should apply.”



Tens of millions of people were vaccinated during the pandemic | CREDIT: WPA POOL/GETTY

The study found that across Europe, the US and Australia there had been more than one million excess deaths in 2020, at the height of the pandemic, but also 1.2 million in 2021 and 800,000 in 2022 after measures were implemented.

Researchers said the figure included deaths from Covid-19, but also the “indirect effects of the health strategies to address the virus spread and infection”.

They warned that side effects linked to the Covid vaccine had included ischaemic stroke, acute coronary syndrome and brain haemorrhage, cardiovascular diseases, coagulation, haemorrhages, gastrointestinal events and blood clotting.

How risky was the AstraZeneca vaccine?

Compared to other scenarios



Death from giving birth
1 in 12,500



Death from going on a scuba dive
1 in 200,000



Chance of under-50s getting blood clot with low platelets from AstraZeneca vaccine
1 in 50,000



Chance of being hit in your home by a crashing aeroplane
1 in 250,000



Death from receiving general anaesthetic
1 in 100,000



Drowning in the bath in the next year
1 in 685,000



Death from hang gliding (one glide)
1 in 125,000



Death from drink 0.5 litres of wine
1 in 1,000,000

German researchers have pointed out that the onset of excess mortality in early 2021 in the country coincided with the rollout of vaccines, which the team said “warranted further investigation”.

However, more recent data regarding side-effects has not been made available to the public, with countries keeping their own individual databases of harms, which rely on self-reporting by the public and doctors, the experts warned.

Delays to other treatments

Researchers said that it was “likely” that the impact of containment measures, restricted healthcare and socioeconomic upheaval during the pandemic had contributed to deaths, although accepted that was difficult to prove.

Gordon Wishart, chief medical officer at Check4Cancer, and visiting professor of cancer surgery at Anglia Ruskin University, warned repeatedly that delaying cancer diagnosis would lead to deaths.

“It was predicted early in the lockdown period that limited access to healthcare for non-Covid conditions would lead to delays in the diagnosis and treatment of time-critical conditions such as cancer, cardiac disease, diabetes and dementia and that this would lead to excess deaths from these conditions,” he said.

NHS England data shows that per 100,000 people the cancer incidence was 521 in the pre-lockdown year, then fell to 456 in 2020-2021, suggesting around 45,000 cancers were missed in the first pandemic year.

The incidence rate rose to 540 per 100,000 the following year suggesting many cancers were diagnosed late, when treatment would be less effective.

Speaking about the potential for vaccine harm, Mr Wishart added: “The authors are correct to point out that many vaccine-related serious adverse events may have been unreported, and point to the fact that the simultaneous onset of excess mortality and Covid vaccination in Germany is worthy of further investigation on its own.

“The paper provides more questions than answers but, it is hard to disagree with their conclusion that further analysis is required to understand the underlying causes of excess mortality to better prepare for the future management of pandemic crises”

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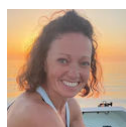
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I was 45 and completely unaware I had stage three bowel cancer