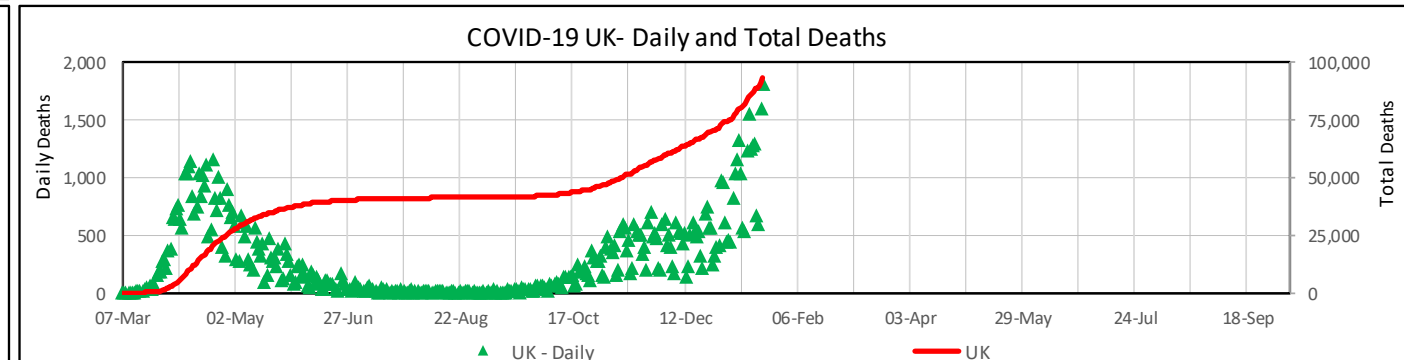
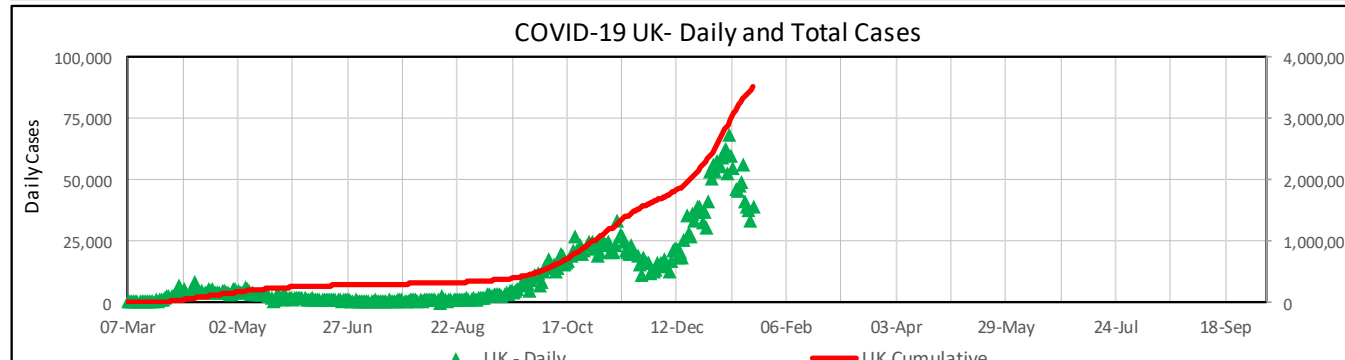
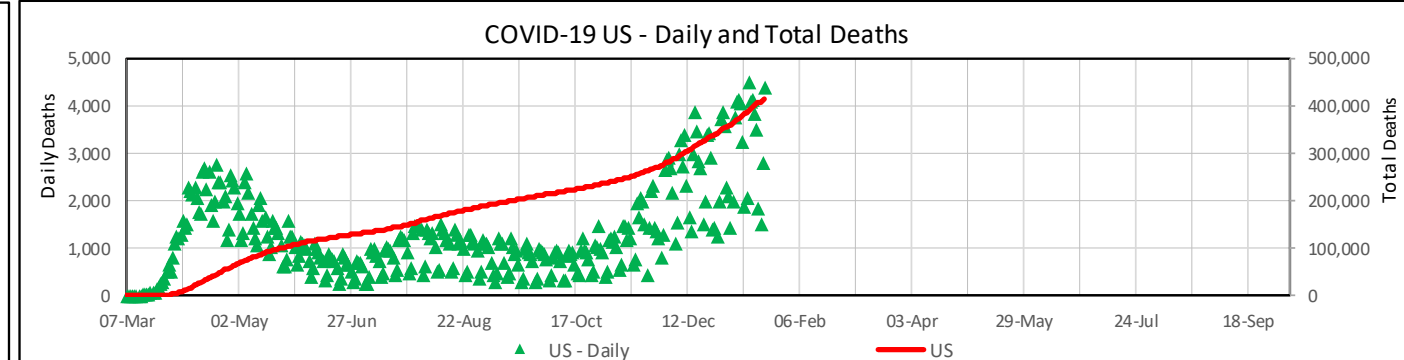
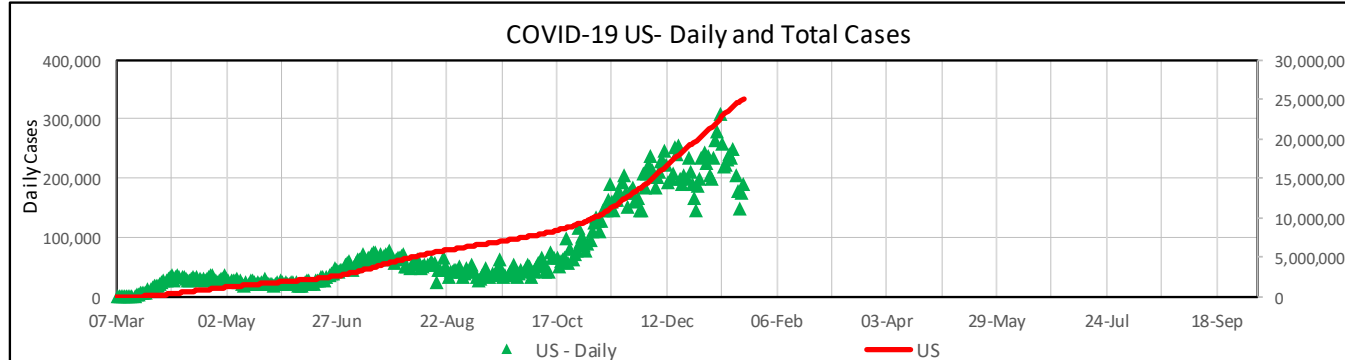
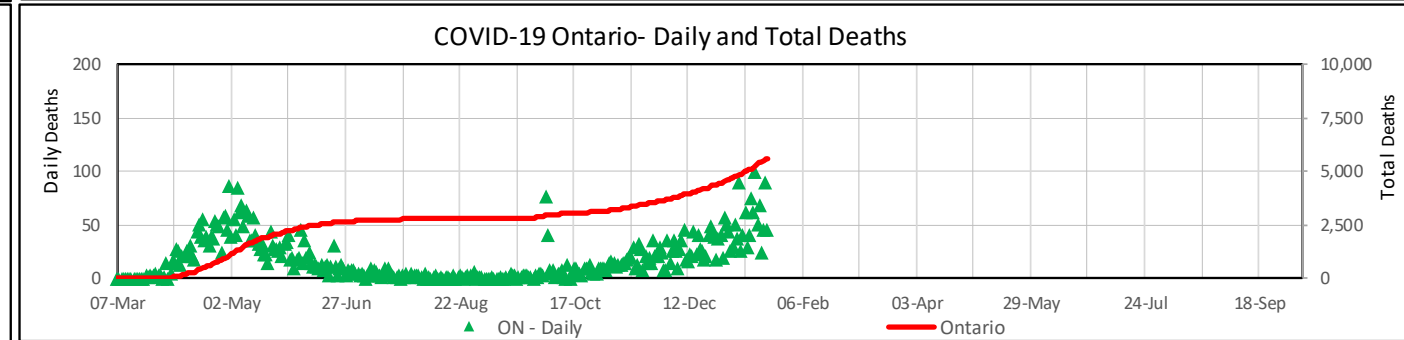
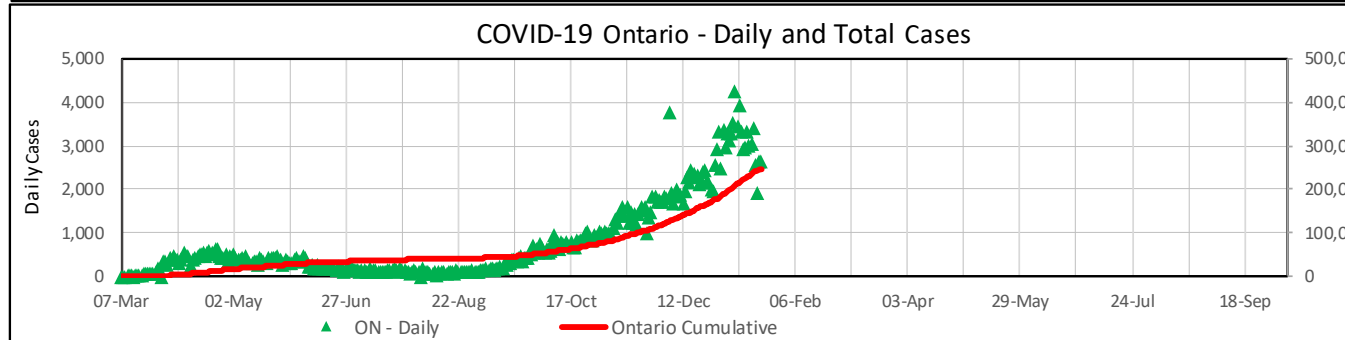
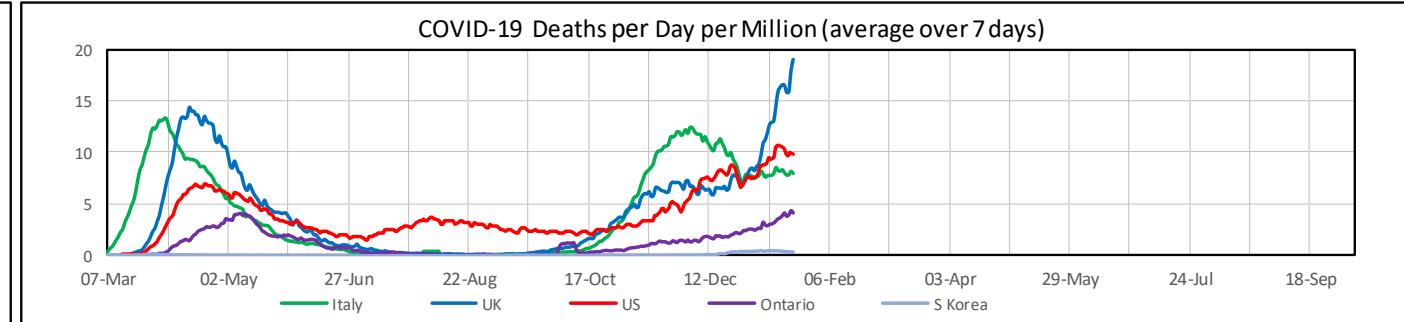
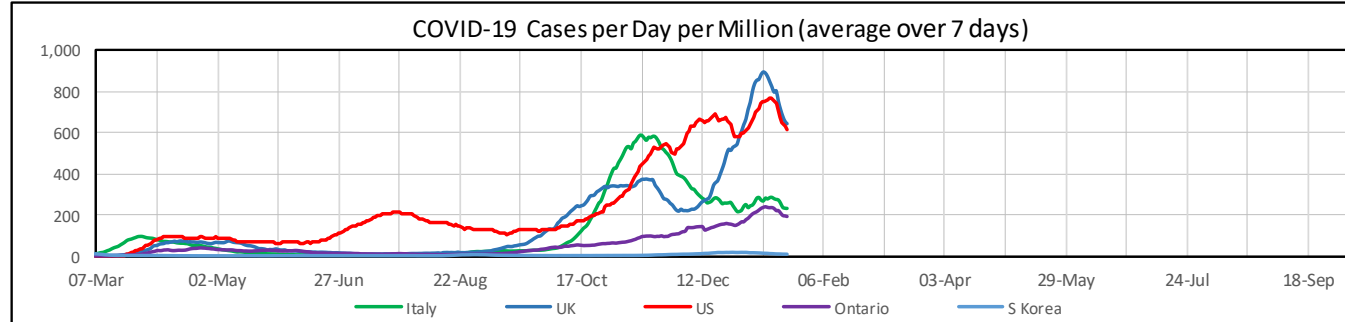
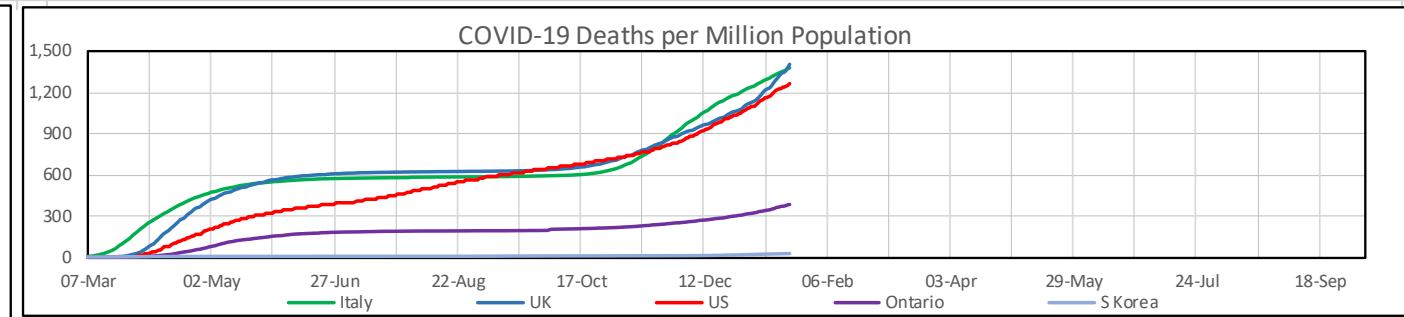
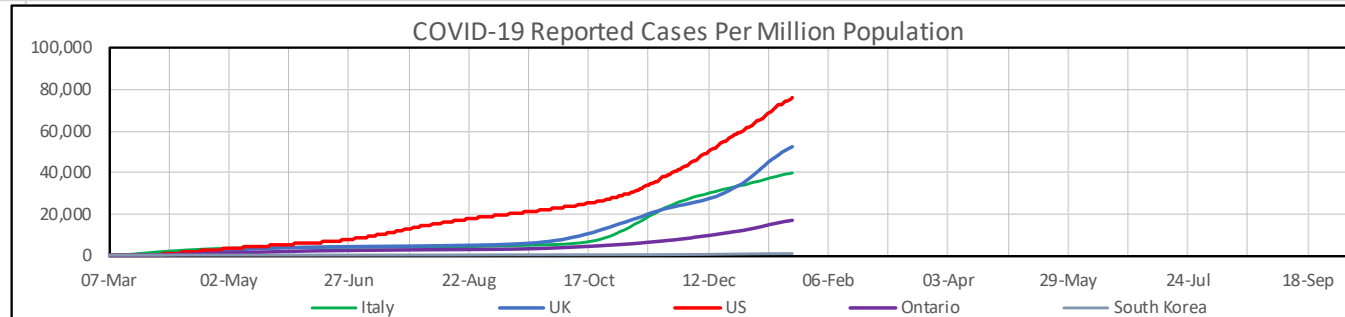


COVID-19 Observations – 21 January, 2021 – by Alex Harrington



My editor, upon whom I rely greatly to keep me on track, and who, unbeknownst to you, has frequently saved you from glimpsing into the darker recesses of my mind, has asked if I can find something positive to say. That's difficult to do when looking at covid data, so it demands a diversion. I suppose it's a positive that I have found that becoming an anti-social recluse with little use for the rest of humanity is not really such a bad thing. I have used the covid time to construct a massive (weight, not size) wood working bench and now I can take useless ugly pieces of wood and turn them into not quite so useless ugly pieces of wood that may be called upon once every two or three years to fulfil their intended purpose. If I can remember where I put them. I have cleaned up and restored several tools that had suffered serious neglect over the years, so now I have many new ways of injuring and maiming myself. I have also done some decluttering, but I don't know if anyone would be able to differentiate the before and after. And, on a not so positive note, I don't think I've become a better, more caring person. So on to covid.

Pfizer has reduced shipments to all countries receiving vaccine from its European facility. They expect to meet their commitments for the first quarter of the year by the end of March, but shipments starting next week and through February will be reduced. For Canada, it means shipments will be reduced to zero next week (can't get much lower), and then be reduced to 50% of the original allotment for February.

Everyone is making a big thing of it, and I suppose the politicians have to do that, but keep two things in mind. First, the vaccine rollout has been so slow and screwed up that this is not really going to make much of a difference. Second, remember what I said ages ago – Canada was late making any purchase commitments, so we will be the first to get hit when things like this happen. We run around now offering double or triple the price for vaccines, but that won't get very far at this point. Plus, you have to expect that there will be screwups with an operation of this magnitude – this is worldwide, not just us.

Speaking of worldwide, the vaccination program isn't really worldwide. Poor countries that cannot afford vaccine have none – they have to wait for more traditional, less expensive, vaccines to be developed, and those are lagging. While we look at 2021 as the year vaccinations could be mostly complete (ideally), nearly 85% of the world's population will not be vaccinated this year. It may be as late as 2024 before the majority of the world's nations have access to vaccines.

Of course, by then we'll have more variations of the virus. An unknown, highly contagious strain was just discovered in Barrie. This virus went through an entire long term care home in just a few days, infecting 122 of 130 residents, plus 69 staff and 2 visitors. It killed 19. We'll have to wait and see if the vaccine works on it.

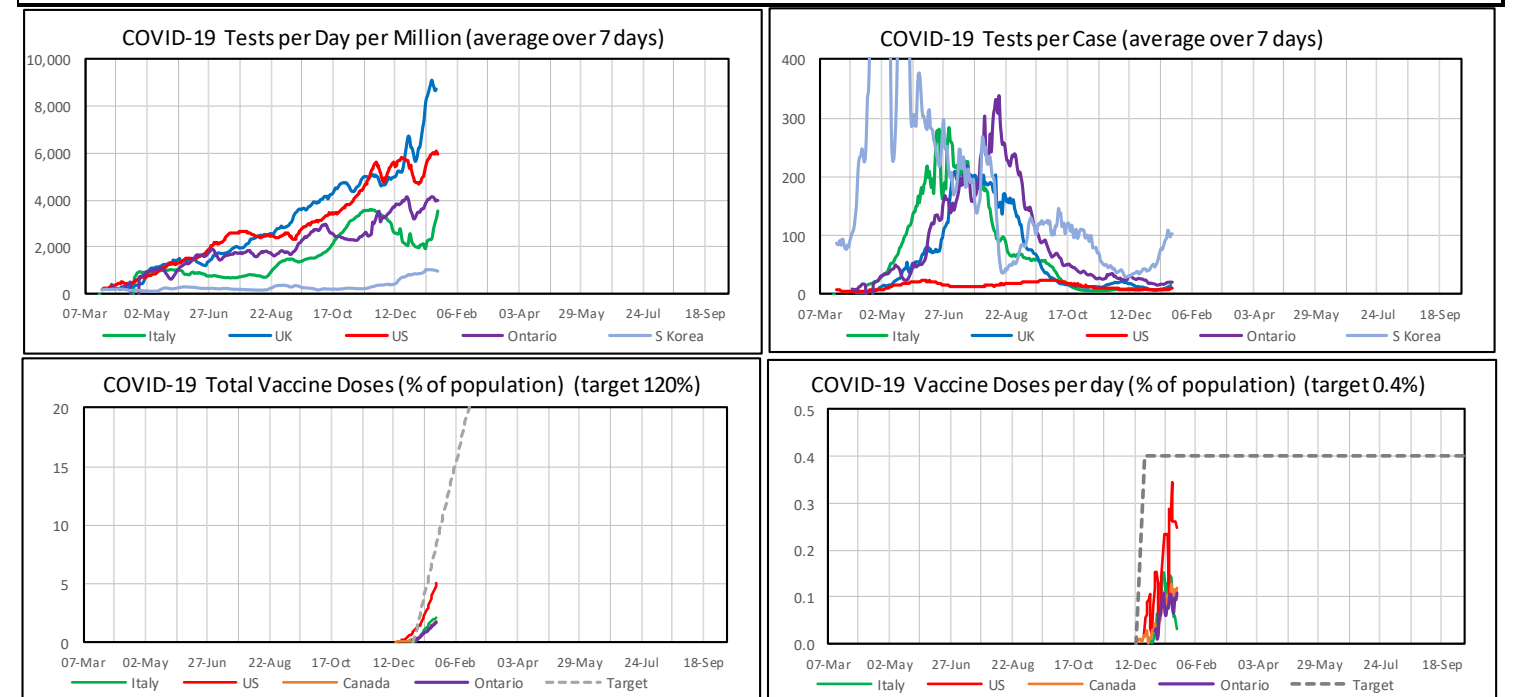
The World Health Organization is the main co-ordinating agency for vaccinations in poorer countries. They are struggling because three of the largest countries – China, the US and Russia – have declined to help with financing this initiative. I don't know if the US position will change with a new administration. The problem is further compounded by hoarding by rich countries – Canada, for example, has ordered five to six times more vaccine doses than we will need. I know – for most of you that's a big so what – that's just how it is. But it reminds you that this virus is not going away quickly.

So how are things going? Let's look at the vaccination chart on the right. We're well below our target of vaccinating 0.4% of the population per day, and with the delivery slowdown, we won't reach it in February. That means we'll be at least a month behind schedule. That means it's the end of November before the vaccination program has achieved its target.

You can look at the testing data if you like to torture yourself. Testing levels have stagnated, and tests per case are declining (or positivity rates are rising – same thing). You hear questions about why aren't the quick turn around tests being used. Here's the answer you won't get anywhere else – if you use those tests, you have to have a plan for what to do when you find cases. There is no plan, so there is a real reluctance to use those tests. This is where our real failures are evident. We do not enforce anything. People waiting for test results are not forced to isolate. They're supposed to, but who checks? Even people with positive results are not monitored or forced to isolate. People crossing the border are not monitored for compliance with isolation rules. We have all these carriers among us and we do nothing to protect ourselves from them.

COVID-19 Summary Data										
	Tests per Million	Tests per Day		Tests per Reported Case		Cases per Million		Deaths per Million		Deaths Per Case
		Total to Date	Average over Last 7 days		Total	Last 7 days	Total to date	Average per day	Total to date	Average per day
			Total	Per Million			Total to date	Average per day Last 7 days	Total to date	Average per day Last 7 days
South Korea	98,467	50,656	989	69	103	1,435	9.4	25	0.329	1.8%
Italy	489,173	213,535	3,527	12	16	39,871	229	1,382	8.0	3.5%
UK	938,558	580,038	8,730	18	13	52,766	643	1,404	19.0	2.7%
US	873,748	1,964,951	5,971	12	10	75,970	615	1,264	9.9	1.7%
Ontario	618,515	58,561	4,019	36	21	16,991	194	385	4.2	2.3%

South Korea and Canada report people tested. The others report total tests. Total tests can be 10-50% higher than people tested



Vaccination charts assume half the people require 2 shots and half require 1 shot, so 1.5 doses per person on average. Assume 80% of population needs vaccination for it to be effective, 80% of 1.5 = 1.2 doses per person on average, so total doses = 120% of population. Assume vaccination program completed in October - 300 days from January, so 1.2 / 300 or 0.004 doses per day, or dosing rate = 0.4% of population per day

What else – how about cases? On the 7-day averages, it looks as if we're getting into the down side from the case peaks, but deaths are still rising, with the UK deaths exploding. I don't know if that's due to the new virus strain – if it is, we have some bad times ahead.

I think any relief we may get from our high case counts will be short-lived. I think too many people are flouting compliance, return to school will likely result in a case surge, then we get to Family Day and shortly thereafter March break, and then Easter on April 4. All these things, one after another, are spaced ideally to undo any relief we may get.

In Ontario, we're told case counts have to get below 1,000 new cases per day before restrictions will be eased. We're around 3,000 now so it may be a while.

My prediction? Write off 2021.

Take care of yourselves and don't endanger others.

P.S.

I think the new US administration will mount a valiant effort to fight covid. I hope they get enough support to succeed and show how it could be done, but I'm not sure that can happen given the attitudes in the US.