Worksheet

Coronavirus: the race between vaccines and new variants

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https://www.ft.com/video/7ba6423a-9952-480a-8dc9-a70c537bff34?playlist-name=editors-picks&playlist-offset=0

Glossary:

the lockdown = le confinement
under strain = sous pression
to look out for something = être vigilant
to scale up = to extend, to increase
to be down to sth/sb = être le résultat de qqc
batches => a batch = un lot
to bring something on stream = render qqc opérational
to hire somebody = embaucher qqn
a surgery = (ici) un cabinet medical
uptake = la prise (d'un médicament, etc.)
to reach out (to sb) = toucher, atteindre
a jab = piqûre, injection (informal)
dashed = anéanti, déçu

Questions (answers on page 2):

1) Why does the journalist say the UK is an interesting case study in the fight against Covid-19?

2) What population has been given priority to get the vaccine? Why?

3) What could hamper the government's vaccination objective?

4) Which country has taken the lead in the vaccination campaign?

5) Why is the UK extending the gap between the first and the second dose?

6) Is this controversial?

7) What is the limit of the current vaccination campaign?

Fill in the blanks (5'11) (answers on page 2)

If new variants ……. both natural and …….. immune responses the vaccines can be ……. to …….. But analysts say this could take anywhere between one and nine months, depending on what regulators demand. The race between vaccines and the virus has …….. But the new variants that …… last year have given Covid-19 ……..

Whether the UK hits its vaccination target of 15m people by mid-February is …….. important but not just …… easing the …….. here. If vaccines don't catch up with the virus soon, we could all find ourselves …….. with a new variant ……...

1) Why does the journalist say the UK is an interesting case study in the fight against Covid-19?
because the UK is both at the forefront of vaccine programmes in the world, and at the same time the UK is affected by a new variant of the virus that is spreading at tremendous speed among the population.

2) What population has been given priority to get the vaccine? Why?
vulnerable people, people with a pre-existing condition.
Because 88% of the people currently dying from the coronavirus are vulnerable people.
15m people are considered vulnerable => government's objective = 15m people to be vaccinated by mid-February in order to end lockdown and release pressure on the NHS

3) What could hamper the government's vaccination objective?
they are not vaccinating as many people as they projected they would (2.1m per week against 2.5m per week)
problem with the procurement of vaccines and not just the vaccines, but also the logistics, i.e. glass vials used to transport them
problem with human resources required to vaccinate all these people + available sites (vaccination centres)

4) Which country has taken the lead in the vaccination campaign?
Israel. Because very centralised + digital health system that made it easier to reach people

5) Why is the UK extending the gap between the first and the second dose?
to speed the vaccination process.
as a result, the number of people who can be vaccinated will double because more people will be able to receive the first dose, and thus will get some protection, limited though it may be. = a way of buying time

6) Is this controversial?
yes it is. Initially, labs recommended 3 weeks between the two doses.
But more and more scientists, including Astra Zeneca, as well as the UK's joint committee on vaccination and immunisation are now recommending it to be extended to up to 12 weeks. They consider extending the gap will not make the vaccine less effective.
There iss no consensus on this, and nobody really knows how much immunity a single dose confers.
Besides, only having half a treatment might encourage more mutations of the virus and thus develop its resistance to the vaccine. but there no evidence that this is true.

7) What is the limit of the current vaccination campaign?
according to early research, vaccines are efficient against the new variants.
But as the virus adapts the human body, new variants will emerge, and though vaccines can be modified to adapt these new variants, research on their adaptation might take months.

If the objective of the 2.5m people vaccinated by mid-February is not reached, that means that vaccines might not be able to catch up with the new variants of the virus.

Fill in the blanks (5'11)

If new variants **evade** both natural and **vaccine-induced** immune responses the vaccines can be **tweaked** to **catch up**. But analysts say this could take anywhere between one and nine months, depending on what regulators demand. The race between vaccines and the virus has **a long way to go**. But the new variants that **popped up** last year have given Covid-19 **a head start**.
Whether the UK hits its vaccination target of 15m people by mid-February is **hugely** important but not just **for the sake of** easing the **lockdown** here. If vaccines don't catch up with the virus soon, we could all find ourselves **back on square on**e with a new variant **pulling far ahead**.