

England's NHS to open COVID surge hubs as infections soar



COVID-19 hospitalizations in the UK rose above the 10,000 mark for the first time since March??

London, January 3 (RHC)-- England's National Health Service (NHS) is setting up coronavirus "surge hubs" at hospitals across the country amid a record number of infections and rising hospital admissions driven by the Omicron variant.

The temporary units are to be located at eight hospitals spread throughout England and will each have the capacity to treat about 100 patients, the NHS reported.

NHS managers have also been asked to identify sites nationwide where up to 4,000 “super-surge” beds can be created should they be needed. “Given the high level of COVID-19 infections and increasing hospital admissions, the NHS is now on a war footing,” NHS England Medical Director Stephen Powis said in a statement.

“We do not yet know exactly how many of those who catch the virus will need hospital treatment, but given the number of infections we cannot wait to find out before we act and so work is beginning from today to ensure these facilities are in place,” he added.

While early data suggests Omicron is less likely to cause serious illness than other variants of coronavirus, public health officials think the sheer number of infections it appears to be causing could lead to a huge jump in people in hospital and deaths.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, however, resisted implementing new COVID-19 restrictions in England during the holiday season, instead looking to a ramped-up booster vaccination program to control the spread of Omicron.

The third dose of COVID-19 vaccine, also known as a booster, is seen as a critical tool to help stem the spread of the new variant after research showed that the initial two doses of the inoculations currently in use in the UK were not offering sufficient protection against it.

Despite Johnson’s reluctance to introduce new curbs, devolved governments in the UK’s other constituent nations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have announced fresh measures in a bid to curtail transmission rates.

The UK has been one of Europe’s worst-hit countries by the COVID-19 pandemic. Its current COVID-19 death toll stands at nearly 150,000 people.

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