

COVID-19 INQUIRY

SECOND STATEMENT OF SIR MARK WALPORT FRS

I, Sir Mark Walport, will say as follows: -

1. I am currently retired from executive appointments and have a portfolio of non-executive directorships, trusteeships, and advisory roles. These include Foreign Secretary and Vice-President, Royal Society; Honorary Distinguished Professor of Medicine, Imperial College; Director, Board of NHS England; Trustee, British Museum; Trustee and Chair, Kennedy Memorial Trust; Trustee, HDR-UK; Chair, Imperial College Health Partners; Chair, Partnership Board Imperial College Academic Health Sciences Centre.
2. I have the degrees of MA MB BChir PhD from the University of Cambridge. I am a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, retired Fellow of the Royal College of Pathologists and Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. I am a Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences, a Fellow of the Royal Society, and an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.
3. I have extensive experience of strategy and policy development, the provision of science advice, the funding and catalysis of research, crisis management and organisational leadership.
4. Prior to 2003, I practised clinical medicine and research as a general physician and rheumatologist mainly at Hammersmith Hospital, the Royal Postgraduate Medical School (RPMS). The RPMS merged with Imperial College in 1997, when I became Head of the Division of Medicine at Imperial College.
5. Of direct relevance to this Inquiry, I was Director of the Wellcome Trust from 2003 – 2013. From April 2013 to September 2017, I was Government Chief Scientific Adviser (GCSA). From April 2017 to June 2020, I was the founding Chief Executive Officer of

UKRI. I overlapped between the roles of GCSA and CEO of UKRI for a few months, with additional support from Professor Chris Whitty, who was Deputy GCSA, then acting GCSA until the substantive appointment of Professor Patrick Vallance as GCSA.

6. I was a member of the Prime Minister's Council for Science and Technology (CST) (and co-chair during my time as GCSA) from 2004 to 2017 and continued to attend CST in my role as the CEO of UKRI until 2020.
7. As the GCSA, I was responsible for running GO-Science, ensuring the Prime Minister and Cabinet received the science advice they needed and driving systemic improvements across His Majesty's Government (HMG) in how science is used.
8. During my time as GCSA, I chaired the Scientific Advice Group in Emergencies (SAGE), and I attended 54 meetings of SAGE from April 2020 to July 2021 in my role as CEO of UKRI (including continuing to represent UKRI after my retirement as CEO).
9. I make this statement pursuant to a request from the Inquiry dated 8 August 2023. The facts of this statement come from my personal knowledge and from my role as the chair of the Royal Society's working party that developed the report of the Royal Society, *Covid-19: examining the effectiveness of non-pharmaceutical interventions*.
10. I was invited by the Royal Society in August 2022 to assemble and chair an expert working group. Its purpose was to gather evidence and compile a report concerning the effectiveness of the use of non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) to reduce transmission of SARS-CoV-2 (the causative agent of COVID-19). NPIs include any public health measure which is not a vaccine or drug.
11. The report was produced by a group of expert scientists convened by the Royal Society that I chaired. It is an independent report of the Royal Society. Six groups of researchers were commissioned to assemble evidence reviews for the report covering the following categories of NPIs: Masks and face coverings; Social distancing and 'lockdowns'; Test, trace and isolate; Travel restrictions and controls across international borders; Environmental controls; and Communications.
12. The report was based on these evidence reviews, coupled with three case studies based on observational data from three of the small number of regions or countries around the world where cases associated with domestic transmission were first identified in early 2020 and were subsequently contained at very low numbers for approximately the first 18 months of the pandemic. These were Hong Kong, New Zealand and South Korea.

13. I produce a copy of the report as exhibit MW/1: INQ000250983 The report comprises an executive summary. This is followed by an introduction to the report, summaries of each of the evidence reviews as listed in para 11 above, cross-national comparisons of NPI effectiveness, a discussion of the findings of the report, acknowledgements, and citations.
14. The key messages of the report are set out in the executive summary and this forms the core of my evidence to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief of its truth.

Signed:

Personal Data

Dated: 22nd August 2023