

Message

From: Orford, Rob (HSS - Primary Care & Health Science) [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=7D38A628177A448789839F37A51FAF75-ORFORD, ROB]
Sent: 12/05/2020 12:20:19
To: Christopher Williams (Public Health Wales - No. 2 Capital Quarter, Health Protection) [Christopher.Williams25@wales.nhs.uk]
CC: Goulding, David (HSS - DHP Public Health) [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=09352f82b48c4a25a6b6cf936fa8673f-Goulding, D]; Atherton, Frank (HSS - Chief Medical Officer) [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=7f89dd16eea4492188440f6fb67d90a2-Atherton, F]; Quentin.Sandifer@wales.nhs.uk
Subject: RE: Science into Policy for COVID-19

Hi Chris

Please could we discuss? Perhaps John isn't sighted on circuit breaker work or surveillance strategy.
Rob

From: John Watkins <WatkinsJ8@I&S>
Sent: 12 May 2020 12:17
To: Quentin.Sandifer@wales.nhs.uk; Orford, Rob (HSS - Primary Care & Health Science) <Rob.Orford@gov.wales>
Cc: Goulding, David (HSS - DHP Public Health) <David.Goulding@gov.wales>; Atherton, Frank (HSS - Chief Medical Officer) <Frank.Atherton@gov.wales>
Subject: Science into Policy for COVID-19

Hi Both

I am writing to you both to express my concern as an Epidemiologist on two issues, the first being the differential approach adopted in Wales compared to England on the relaxing of Lockdown and the second around the almost evangelistic belief that the way to monitor control of the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK is via the value of R_0 .

On the first point, I find it quite alarming that the four home nations are not marching in step in addressing the challenge of exiting 'lockdown'.

From a scientific point of view, the epidemiology of this disease does not warrant this differential approach and therefore I am concerned that opinion is diverging. Wales, with its extended land border with England, crossed daily by citizens for work, with differing rules backed by law, puts people in a particularly difficult position. If all policy in this matter is based on Science and I am not aware of any difference in the scientific advice given to Welsh Government compared to England, then why have ministers chosen a different course?

On the second and more worrying point R_0 seems to have taken on a meaning and an unwarranted prominence, in the national strategy to control this pandemic.

Just for clarity the following should be made clear to politicians and decision makers about R_0 ;

- R_0 is difficult to calculate at the best of times but virtually impossible, with any degree of certainty, in the middle of an epidemic with incomplete data
- The value of R_0 is very dependent on the method by which it is calculated, with little agreement between methods