

Message

From: John Edmunds [I&S]
Sent: 15/03/2020 13:46:46
To: Vallance, Patrick (GO-Science) [P.Vallance1@go-science.gov.uk]; Chris Whitty [Chris.Whitty@dhsc.gov.uk]
CC: Graham Medley [I&S]
Subject: Data problems

Dear Patrick and Chris,

I know that Graham has sent you a number of emails over the last 12 hours or so about the data. This was stimulated by us looking at the latest data from PHE last night, which had 2 important features.

- 1) There was an alarming rise in the “sporadic” cases. There were 62 of them reported by yesterday, although as with the rest of the data these cases actually had onset a considerable period ago. The sporadic cases are the ones that we really care about as they are the ones picked up through the routine testing in hospitals and sentinel GP surgeries.
- 2) The data are very poor in quality and have never been presented in way that allows reasonable estimation of the scale of the epidemic or even trends. This is despite repeated requests over the last week or so from myself and others.

With this in mind, I strongly suggest that we need a precautionary approach to our social distance policy. If the data are unreliable, then we need to step up our social distance measures much more rapidly than we might otherwise have thought necessary. I think we should immediately introduce HH quarantine, banning of all social contacts (bars, restaurants, cinemas etc, in particular) and cocooning for the old and high risk groups. We might also want to flag up school closure.

If the data can be trusted then we might be able to plot the next phase of our response more carefully. However, it will be some time before we know whether this might be the case, which at present we do not seem to have.

Best wishes,

John