

We have such a long way to go before we beat Covid-19

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Since the announcements on Covid-19 deaths began in the UK I have not been alone in thinking there was something odd about them. They, and related figures for those on ITU, and even the number of cases, made no sense. They simply did not behave as pandemics seem likely to do (i.e. exponentially) and most especially so before lockdown had any chance of an impact, which it probably has now.

But then we realised that the data was wrong.

Deaths reported were only in hospitals. They were way out of date. Those not in hospital were not recorded. Care homes and deaths at home did not, apparently, count. And then last week we found as a result [that deaths were at least twice as high as the government had said](#).

Numbers in ITU also made no sense. And then I realised that almost certainly these were only counting people in ITUs, and not those being ventilated off ITUs, which was happening all over the place. I admit I have no evidence for this, but given the pattern of semantic differentiation seen in other stats I very strongly suspect this to be true.

And of course the number of cases is wrong: the UK abandoned testing and tracing on 12 March, believing that curtailment of coronavirus was pointless despite all the medical advice, and that herd immunity was the answer. Since the policy has not changed, meaning that the UK has no effective mechanism or chance of coming out of lockdown unlike other similar countries, the data remains pure CRAP, which stands for a 'completely rubbish approximation' to the truth.

But now we know things are worse. We [know people are dying in very large numbers at home](#). They're not necessarily dying of Covid-19. But they're dying. The Guardian discusses this today.

People are not going to A&E, by choice. Some are dying instead. A South Wales A&E consultant has said he has not seen a case of sepsis for three weeks when he expects one a day. The missing ones are dead. That's what happens.

The elderly are not being taken from care homes. And we now know they are dying there instead. The stress on staff - of whom I have seen many over the last few years, before my father died 18 months ago - must be immense. And none are well rewarded from the stress they are suffering.

Despite this we're now told the government thinks Covid-19 deaths are '[near a peak](#)'. They may be. But they don't know that. That is all that can be said with certainty. I repeat, all that we know is that they do not know.

They do not know because they chose to stop testing.

They did not know because even though from 2017 onwards they knew they were unprepared for this eventuality they did nothing to prepare for it.

We know because we know that the government did not invest in the NHS - hence the appeal of the wholly false promise of £350 million a week on the side of a bus.

We know because the staff are telling us.

And we know because they are building morgues, buying body bags and digging mass graves, which tells us that they really have no idea in which direction this is all heading, but that it's reasonable to assume that the worst has yet to come.

Unfortunately, maybe that's true.

I do believe that sometime soon the UK will have to slowly reopen. The condition may be face masks. There will be social isolating for a long time to come. We will not go back to normal as we so recently described it for a long time, maybe. And maybe never, because what was what it was like is so likely to never be again.

But what we do know is that right now most people are unlikely to have had coronavirus. Even those who are sure they have, as I am, cannot be 100% certain: no one has tested us, after all. We're just down to balance of probabilities. And we also face the risk that it may be possible to get it twice.

In this case we are a very, very long way from herd immunity, which only a vaccine can really deliver. So waves of lockdown and virus are going to continue. And more people are going to die.

A little while ago a colleague said to me that surely I did not believe that we'd have 20,000 Covid-10 deaths? How could I do that? The answer was that the data, which he as a data specialist should have understood, said that it was inevitable: we'd started tackling an exponential growth way too late to prevent that happening. I said then that I thought the figure of 20,000 was way smaller than I thought it would actually be.

I have another colleague, a doctor in this case, who has thought throughout that we're

actually facing hundreds of thousands of deaths, and that we still are. The curve may have been flattened for now - and thank goodness for that. I am not disputing that the government has achieved something, albeit to late. But without track and trace - the supposedly discredited WHO's answer to this - and which is the only proven mechanism that has delivered results, as South Korea and Germany are proving - and which we, like Trump, will not do - then there will be not just tens of thousands more deaths from or as a consequence of coronavirus, but maybe hundreds of thousands.

This is our reality. And the result is that discussion of lockdowns well into 2021 are wholly appropriate: they are going to happen.

At some point this will end.

Then we will have some idea of the true casualty rate.

But then again, we also will not, because the human cost of these policy failings will now last the lifetime of all those now on earth. For some that remaining time will be foreshortened, unnecessarily. For others it will be blighted. And much of that will be because governments dedicated to self interest, national boundaries, austerity and isolation have not acted in the public and common interest.

We need to restore that sense of the public and common interest if we are to survive this.

Only that can make a better future possible.

But right now the winners are solely in the financial sector, to which most of the government's money has also been directed so far.

We have such a long way to go.

And so much thinking to do.