

Vaccination Euphoria Wanes

I hate January in the best of years! It's cold, wet, muddy and miserable, like anyone who dares venture out for a walk. And this year is worse than any. Grump over, now for the good news.

Reasons to be cheerful No. 1: many of us oldies, including me, have had our first Covid vaccination (the Pfizer BioNTech variety), for which we must be truly thankful. And a few have even had their second booster! But now I fret over the interval before the second jab, extended by the government in the interests of public health and vaccinating as many people as possible. Without any clinical evidence that an extended interval will work. I have taken it up with our local Health Centre who made no comment – have they been gagged? And with our MP, who shares my general concern but I fear she will do little, being a Junior Minister.

Vaccination hasn't brought much change in our lives, apart from the fact that we're 50% less likely to catch the virus. Or is it 30%? There are so many different opinions being aired by scientists that I no longer know who to believe. At the beginning of the pandemic, our politicians said grandly 'We're following the science'. But which science? And we're still in lockdown and will remain so for some weeks to come, until pressure on our sorely tested NHS is relieved. And while I might be protected I could still be asymptomatic and pass the virus on to someone else. 'No one is safe until we're all safe', as the WHO says.

With numbers of deaths now over 100,000, recriminations have started over the government's handling of the pandemic in this country. I can do no better than point you to an article in [the Independent newspaper](#)

The one notable success is the roll-out of the vaccination programme and for that I thank the NHS, sturdily backed up by the Army.

The fields round about are flooded like I've rarely seen them, as we've had torrential rain and snow melt on top of saturated ground. But (reasons to be cheerful no. 2): the days are lengthening; white snowdrops, cyclamen, winter flowering clematis, primroses and hellebores are gently poking their noses through the green and brown; seeds are sown, plants are bought, one thing that doesn't change is the turning of the seasons.

With most countries having closed borders, thoughts turn to where to holiday this year. Most of the UK will have a staycation, but a break somewhere – anywhere, any time – would be good, much as I love my village. And it's far too soon to be tempted by the thought of live music, theatres, cinema, restaurants ...

It won't be over by March as I had optimistically hoped some months ago. We're now looking at summer or early autumn – if the vaccination programme continues to run smoothly and with no interruptions to supplies.

Mary Robinson

