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Comment by Haroon Siddique, Senior Reporter of The Guardian



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There has been a lot of reaction today to the [report](#) in the Guardian that people who have recovered from Covid-19 may lose their immunity to the disease within months.

This was based on the first longitudinal study of its kind, by King's College London, which found that levels of antibodies that can destroy the virus peaked about three weeks after the onset of symptoms then swiftly declined.

Mala Maini, a professor of viral immunology and consultant physician at UCL, said:

What are the implications of the study? Even if you're left with no detectable circulating antibodies, that doesn't necessarily mean you have no protective immunity because you likely have memory immune cells (B and T cells) that can rapidly kick into action to start up a new immune response if you re-encounter the virus. So you might well get a milder infection.

Dr Jonathan Stoye, group leader, retrovirus-host interactions laboratory, at the Francis Crick Institute, said:

While this result is still very preliminary, with relatively low numbers of subjects followed for a limited period of time and without any information about responses following a second exposure to virus, confirmation could have very significant ramifications for our understanding of immunity to Sars-CoV-2 and vaccine development. In addition it would suggest that we need to redouble our efforts to identify and develop novel therapeutic strategies, either by repurposing existing drugs or by performing new drug screens.

Dr Stephen Griffin, an associate professor in the school of medicine, University of Leeds, said:

The implications of this study in terms of both managing the pandemic and the need for widespread education are broad-ranging. First, herd immunity approaches, still callously promoted by some, are clearly non-viable. Second, should a viable vaccine become available, it may require regular boosts or combination of different platforms to elicit the best possible protection. Third, development of additional lines of antiviral therapies and/or drugs that lessen the severe inflammation in advanced Covid-19 is essential to support future vaccination programmes.

Finally, the troubling media reports around [Covid-19 parties](#), conspiracies, unfounded often dangerous therapies and politically motivated minimising of pandemic impact needs to be countered by widespread education and unified approaches to public health, such as that led by WHO. We cannot afford to simply wait for vaccines or drugs and should make every effort to eliminate the virus using non-pharmaceutical approaches; the cost to life is already too high.