

Thoughts on ...

How to rid the world of Covid

Changing mindsets, learning lessons

Summary

Living with Covid has been yet another huge blunder by the government with unimaginably tragic consequences. Since Covid restrictions were lifted by Johnson and Javid in July 2021, more than 71,000 people in the UK have died from the virus, bringing the total to a horrific 227,000. (numbers as at 1/6/23) The pandemic is not over and we must stop talking about it in the past tense.

Instead we must accept that Covid has not gone away and be determined to chase it down. This paper explains how the virus can be almost completely eliminated by acknowledging our shortcomings in dealing with it and not repeating them. It proposes that there is a way to rid the UK and the rest of the world of the scourge of Covid and that with determination, discipline and personal responsibility this should not be difficult to achieve.

The way is:

If no one catches Covid no one will be able to spread it. No getting it, no spreading it. It's as simple as that.

Everyone must therefore make it their mission NOT to catch Covid.

Ridding the world of Covid is not fantasy; living with Covid is.

Quercus Publications

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Living without Covid – three changes to make

Living with Covid is not working and will never work. It is another huge misjudgement with appalling and unimaginably tragic consequences. As a strategy it has proved to be disastrous.

It is the wrong road to take. If we are going to rid the world of the scourge of Covid, which must surely be our global aim, we must take the road that leads in completely the opposite direction: the road to **living without Covid**. The road of fighting the virus and not surrendering to it; fight not flight.

How do we know the strategy of living with Covid has been such a horrific and tragic disaster? The answer is all around us and plain to see. It can be seen in the fact that so many people we know personally have become infected since restrictions were lifted, and in the fact that nationally infections were recently (July 2022) as high as about one in 17 of the UK population. This would have meant that if you were shopping in your local supermarket you could have been breathing in the aerosols of three or four people. Or if you were in a bus, coach or railway carriage you could have been doing the same.

There is a high possibility that since the since the lifting of restrictions whenever you are with a group of other people the air around you will be swirling with Covid. This will be especially true in enclosed spaces where there are a lot of people crowded together and the ventilation is poor, such as planes, cinemas, schools or a busy pub. Even outside at a football match or music festival Covid will be in the air when you are up close to others.

All around us and plain to see also are the vast numbers of people in the UK and throughout the world who are presently infected with Covid or who are suffering serious illness because of it. And tragically all around us and every day are those who are dying from Covid. Currently in the UK weekly deaths are 400, making an annual total of 20,800. In Europe they are 3,729 (annual 193,908), in the USA 1,594 (82,888), and globally 9,223(479,596). These deaths are all steadily

adding to the indescribably horrific totals which are mentioned in the next section.

Nearly all the recent deaths during the living with Covid strategy have been avoidable as they have been throughout the pandemic. The whole concept of living with Covid represents insanity and immorality on an epic scale. There is no reason to believe it will work if it has not worked so far.

Humanity has always been faced by disasters and great crises, some of which have been self-inflicted and some not. At the moment we have a terrible war in Ukraine as well as other ongoing conflicts in the world. We have the challenge of climate change and more immediately a cost of living crisis. But of all the global disasters we face, and however devastating they all are, Covid remains by far the greatest.

It may not be possible to eliminate the virus entirely which is the Zero Covid strategy, but if we reduce its horrific effects to a bare minimum then we will certainly rid the world of the cruel torment it continues to present. I have called this response to the virus, Nano Covid, and have written about it previously. (1)

Nano Covid will aim to reduce the number of deaths here in the UK to less than 100 a year and globally to under 12,000. It will also eliminate Long Covid and serious illness caused by the virus. There will be no more disruption to daily life, health services or employment.

I have no doubt that this is possible and, with determination, discipline and a change of mindset within all of us, it will not be difficult to achieve. To achieve the goal we must make three changes to the way the pandemic has become embedded in both our conscious and unconscious minds. The three changes are: first, to recognise the seriousness of the present situation and not believe the pandemic is over or that we can live with Covid; second, to acknowledge the huge errors of judgement that all of us have made in how we have thought and acted during the pandemic, and to learn from these errors; and

third, to switch from a mindset of defeat to one focussed on the belief that the war against Covid can finally be won.

These changes to our mindsets must be made globally if we are to rid the world of Covid but what follows is largely based on our experience here in the UK. However, given that this is broadly similar to that of many other countries my arguments and proposals can be applied to humanity across the planet.

Change 1 – to recognise the seriousness of the present situation

Number of deaths

The first change of mindset many people, especially decision-makers and influencers, must make is to acknowledge the present serious position in which we still find ourselves. Despite the vaccine rollout and more effective treatments the pandemic is certainly not over and Covid is circulating dangerously.

Some relevant statistics taken from UK Office for National Statistics, Our World in Data, and Worldometer at the time of writing are:

Total deaths up to 10/12/22:

UK 212,766 Europe 1.99 million

USA 1.08 million World 6.65 million

UK deaths since lifting restrictions on 19 July 2021: 82,972

UK deaths since lifting restrictions on 24 February 2022: 50,036

(see Note 3)

Total deaths in England and Wales by age group:

Under 50: 4,987

50 – 59: 9,633

60 – 69: 20,480

70 – 79: 43,637

Over 80: 112,137

On a number of occasions I have compared mortalities from Covid in the UK with mortalities suffered during the Second World War, the last cataclysmic event we endured. In total there were 67,000 civilian casualties, giving an annual average of 11,000, and 384,000 military casualties, giving an annual average of 64,000. To emphasise how grim the situation was just before Christmas 2021, I pointed out that annual deaths from Covid, 98,000, (weekly total x 52) were then 9 times greater than civilian deaths in the Second World War and 1.5 times greater than military deaths. So, unbelievably, annual Covid deaths have been far, far worse than those of civilian deaths during the last war and in total are now over three times greater.

If it is the first duty of government to protect its citizens the UK has failed badly as indeed have many other countries. It is truly unthinkable that so far approximately 1 in 28 of the over 80s have died from Covid, a tragic and horrific failure.

Weekly infections are now at about one in 60 of the UK population. This is clearly an improvement on one in 17 but after almost three years of the pandemic the risk of breathing in Covid aerosols remains extremely high whenever you go to a supermarket, take public transport or have a meal out.

Normal, but not normal

It is understandable that individuals, societies and governments throughout the world, with the exception of China, have decided to live with Covid. We all wish to return to a normal life after the trauma that has been endured during the peaks of the pandemic. Normal, that is, for those who have not lost loved ones or who are not suffering long-term physical or mental health consequences as a result of the virus.

Normal means family and daily life without restrictions, and everything fully functioning in the areas of employment, education,

health care and the delivery of any sort of service. Perhaps more than anything normal means the pursuit of the many and varied leisure activities we have become accustomed to – holidays at home and abroad, day trips, playing and watching live sport, and visits to music festivals, exhibitions and the cinema. And, it also means, of course, having a drink or a meal with friends or, dare I say, going to a party.

My guess is that the overwhelming majority of people in the UK and other countries believe that life is almost completely back to normal because they are now able to do all these things. Life, they believe, is back to where it was before Covid struck. Sadly this belief could not be more wrong.

It is not normal to have waves of a deadly virus sweeping the world bringing death and serious illness to vast numbers of people of all ages across all continents. It is not normal to have so many people off work from one virus, and it is not normal for health services to be under the extreme and unremitting pressure which has built up as a consequence of the pandemic.

We have been lulled into thinking we are getting back to normal but with numbers as they are, waves of disease constantly rolling in, new variants arriving, and waning vaccines, we are nowhere near a state of normality.

The pandemic is not over however much we wish it were and however much governments around the world would like us to believe it is.

Change 2 – to acknowledge our huge errors of judgement and to learn from them

There is no doubt in my mind that in our response to the pandemic we have let ourselves down badly as a society here in Britain, as a global society and as a species. I include the latter because we have evolved as a species to possess big brains which have not been used to make the best decisions.

In order to rid the world of Covid it is essential that we change our mindsets from believing we “got the big calls right” to acknowledging the huge errors of judgement that have been made by all of us but particularly by our political leaders. If we had got the big calls right we would not have suffered such a terrible loss of life.

We must learn from our mistakes and learn from bitter experience. This will require humility, moral courage and self-awareness in order to acknowledge and accept these mistakes. It will also require much more careful and rational thinking in political decision-making and a continual challenging of one’s own established beliefs. There is no place for tribal politics in a national emergency and no place for blindly following the crowd whichever crowd it may be.

Tragically there has already been one failed attempt in the UK to learn lessons from the government’s mismanagement of the pandemic. In 2021 a parliamentary committee carefully considered the evidence of a wide range of expert witnesses and identified a number of significant errors of judgement. These included: “the serious early error” of abandoning the policy of suppression, delaying the first lockdown, and the failure to protect those requiring social care. The government’s failure to learn from the disastrous policies referred to in the report has resulted in tens of thousands more wholly avoidable deaths since it was published.

When mistakes and shortcomings are clearly identified, as they were in this report, action must be taken to ensure they are neither continued nor repeated. This is so obvious it should not need saying.

Human behaviour

My understanding of the determinants of human behaviour is very limited but clearly this must be an area of knowledge which requires the closest examination in order to explain fully why and how we behave in any situation – whether as individuals, or collectively as members of a family or a wider group. It is necessary to explore the social factors and visceral instincts which lie behind our thoughts,

values and behaviour in order to explain them. In order to do this we will need to enter, at the very least, the realms of psychology, sociology, evolutionary biology and ethics.

This will enable us to understand why we need to follow the herd and why we have leaders of the pack; why we are also motivated by self-interest and the interests of our families and loved ones; why tribal politics has hindered the government's response to Covid; and why so many people have been in denial about the deadly nature of the virus.

If we can identify these underlying factors, as well as understand their effect on behaviour, we will be better able to know how to counter them and ultimately better able to learn from our mistakes. It is vital that these factors receive due attention in the Covid public enquiry as they are central to a full understanding of how the UK and the world responded to the pandemic. Experts in various academic fields must be asked to contribute to our understanding of the deep roots of our behaviour.

Failures, mistakes and shortcomings

I am identifying the failures, mistakes and shortcomings in the UK's response to Covid as follows:

1. Not putting lives first

The most unforgivable and deeply immoral decision by the government, its advisers, people in positions of leadership and many members of the general public has been not to put lives first; not to make saving lives the absolute number one priority and total focus throughout the pandemic. Even at the start of the pandemic there seemed to be an element of confusion when it seemed restrictions were necessary to protect the NHS rather than save lives directly. I was puzzled why the slogan being used at the time was not simply Stay Home, Save Lives, rather than Stay Home, Protect the NHS, Save Lives.

It was not long before I heard the “balance to be struck” argument, first of all from a former Cabinet minister and then from others. My response to this argument was summarised in an email I sent to MPs on 25 May 2020:

Jobs can be restored, the economy can be restored, normal daily life can be restored, leisure pursuits can be restored BUT ... HUMAN LIVES CANNOT BE RESTORED. It is because society and the government did not grasp, and still has not grasped, this fundamental fact and moral imperative, that we have suffered such appalling and tragic carnage – the third worst in the world. THERE IS NO BALANCE TO BE STRUCK.

I perfectly understand why those employed in the travel and hospitality industries were extremely anxious about their livelihoods but in a humane and compassionate society nothing is more important than protecting human life. It is, after all, the most precious possession we have.

If the government had adopted a lives before livelihoods strategy, and rallied the country behind this, not only could the death toll have been reduced to under 3,000 but the economy would have gradually opened up after the first lockdown.

Lives first must still be the number one priority for our actions.

2. Failure to grasp how serious the pandemic has been

The pandemic has not been taken seriously enough by too many people neither in respect of the ease of Covid transmission, nor in the unimaginable number of deaths among all age groups that the virus has caused. Clearly after the initial realisation that it was bringing carnage to the UK and around the world it was taken extremely seriously in the weeks that followed but prior to this there was complacency, despite what was happening in Italy and elsewhere. The Prime Minister said he was shaking hands continuously, the

Cheltenham festival was allowed to go ahead, and the UK's Chief Scientific Officer, stated that outdoor sporting events were safe to attend. Shortly afterwards he suggested that herd immunity might be a reasonable strategy to follow and later stated that 20,000 deaths from Covid would be a good result for the UK.

My concern that neither the government nor its advisors were taking the spread of the virus seriously enough prompted the first of many emails to my MP, and other MPs, to express my disquiet about various issues. This is how the email began:

Like many other people I am very, very concerned that the government's approach to dealing with the Corona Virus outbreak is seriously misguided. I acknowledge that I could be wrong but equally the government should acknowledge the same.

I have been utterly bewildered at the logic of the discussion about different phases in the spread of the virus and moving from one phase to the next. Common sense, often more useful I suspect than big data and computer modelling, surely dictates that there is only one phase that matters – the overall phase of limiting the spread and eventually trying to eliminate the virus altogether.

(2) See email in full

The first lockdown was announced on 23 March 2020. Clearly our government was now taking the pandemic extremely seriously as were other governments around the world. Mandatory restrictions were introduced to limit the transmission of the virus. Measures included: staying at home except for exercise and essential reasons such as shopping for necessities; not mixing with other households; closing schools and colleges; and not visiting nursing homes. Nightclubs, pubs, and cafes were closed as were cinemas, gyms, places of worship and libraries. Initially sporting fixtures at all levels were prohibited.

Everyone will have personal memories of the lockdowns and the restrictions. Most people have lockdown stories about how they “coped” and occupied their time. One of my abiding memories will be offering the use of my lawn to my nieces and their children for a picnic lunch, which was not quite up to my usual standard of hospitality. Nor was my request that they should use the nearby public conveniences rather than my own facilities.

Unfortunately as time passed the term seemed to broaden in scope and for many it became associated with any precautions they were being advised to take. Lockdowns and restrictions began to be seen by some as an infringement of basic liberties rather than the most effective way of reducing viral transmission.

We all remember the key features of the lockdown rules but recalling their bewildering detail is another matter altogether. Regulations covered rules on aspects of life such as how many households could meet, how many people could attend different sorts of gathering, which shops were allowed to stay open, what time pubs should close and which countries people could visit. When the tier system was introduced different rules applied to different parts of the country according to whether they were in Tier 1, 2 or 3. Anyone who wishes to refresh their memories about the precise rules and regulations can easily do so by visiting Wikipedia’s Covid timeline.

I will continue to argue that the two long lockdowns in the UK, March to July 2020 and January to March 2021, were successful in dramatically reducing transmission and deaths and the data supports this argument. But they would have been infinitely more successful to the point of virtually eliminating the virus if from day one they had been completely watertight and rigorously enforced. In fact if the first lockdown had been completely watertight and the strategy had been elimination instead of mitigation it is quite possible the loss of life in

the UK may have been as low as three thousand and Covid virtually eradicated.

A clear indication of Covid not being taken seriously enough even in the early days of the first lockdown can be seen in the way in which a number of high profile public figures contracted the virus, probably by behaving too casually. These included Boris Johnson, Matt Hancock and Professor Whitty who between them were the public face of the government's plan to control the situation.

Throughout the pandemic a significant number of people, especially amongst our politicians, have been too casual about the virus. There are various reasons for this: they have not understood how dangerous it is; for psychological reasons they have chosen not to believe it is a danger to themselves; they have felt the best way to deal with it has been to keep calm and carry on; and, of course, if they were young and healthy they have probably been confident the effects would not be serious if they caught it.

It soon became apparent to me, however, that what was happening was a unique event in human history – unique because it has produced human carnage on a vast scale both here and throughout the world, it has had a global impact with every country having been affected, and it has disrupted society as never before in peacetime. It has been real life science fiction.

My ongoing concern that the true magnitude of the crisis had not been grasped by the government or political establishment led to a steady flow of emails and tweets to those in authority about what needed to be done. Links were provided to posts on my website in order to explain an argument more fully than in a short soundbite or brief comment.

This was nothing new as I had been using my website to put across my views on political issues for a number of years. I am happy to confess

that a considerable amount of self-interest played a part in trying to persuade the government to change course but I like to think that at the same time I was advocating in the interests of others. I still believe this to be the case.

Looking back on my emails, tweets and posts my dismay at the failure of the government to bring the virus under control becomes ever more apparent. It was causing carnage on a daily basis. This is what I wrote to MPs on 22 April 2020:

The only way to reduce the appalling carnage caused by the virus is to move to an almost total lockdown. Talk of relaxing or ending the lockdown is dangerously misguided.

There should be no discussion of plateaus but the utmost determination to bring about a steep downward curve immediately. This is obvious COMMON SENSE and we don't need graphs and charts to support it.

Only NHS staff, carers and essential workers in the private and public sectors should be allowed to do their work and move about. Food and provisions should either be delivered or collected from collection points with definitely no more non-essential deliveries to people's homes such as chocolates or plants for the garden. And we certainly don't need junk mail or even newspapers.

In June I argued against the reduction of the 2m rule to 1m for social distancing and in October warned about the delay in the next lockdown which followed in November. And if the winter lockdown of 2021 had been a complete shutdown from mid-December as I suggested, it would have prevented the appalling loss of life which resulted from the so-called third wave.

By July 2021 when most restrictions were lifted the country had been told by new health secretary, Sajid Javid, to stop "cowering" from the virus and that we all had to learn to live with it. Let's keep life moving was the slogan of the day and for the government and many members of the public this seemed to mean taking Covid less and less seriously despite the fact it was still out of control.

In September and October 2021 I tweeted regularly about the rising death toll and urged the government to do more. On 13 September I tweeted:

Covid totally out of control. Death toll running at 51,000 a year to add to 157,000 who've already died. Horrific.

Only way to get life back to normal is to fight the virus together NOW not learn to live with it. Let's go for #nanocovid – not hard.

A few days later I sent a message to the CEO of a supermarket chain saying I had been shopping at a local store and noticed there were many customers and staff not wearing masks. I asked if they could please do more to persuade people to mask up by putting up larger notices and using tannoy messages.

FAO: Chief Executive

Just been shopping at local Waitrose. Too many customers and staff not wearing masks.

Virus is still totally out of control so would be grateful if you could please do more to persuade people to mask up - larger notices, tannoy messages etc

By late March 2022 Covid numbers were giving Sajid Javid “no particular cause for concern” and Chris Whitty was saying we have to “just roll with it”. My response was:

With Covid deaths now at an annual rate of 55,000 adding to 187,000 already dead, these comments prove beyond doubt that we cannot allow these men to continue in post.

And rolling with it, instead of confronting it, is what most people have been doing. With no guidance or information coming from the government, with a widespread acceptance that letting the virus rip would create herd immunity, and with an almost universal belief that vaccines would prevent illness and death, it was reasonable for society to feel comfortable living with Covid. Normal life as it was before the

pandemic could safely resume and we no longer needed to take the virus seriously, or so it was believed.

We cannot leave this brief summary of the mistakes that have been made in the management of Covid without mentioning “Partygate”. Aside from the law-breaking involved in the partying culture of 10 Downing Street the revelation that these parties took place clearly indicates that senior government advisers and politicians, including Johnson and Sunak, were unconcerned they could be spreading the virus to other people. The deeply offensive video of Johnson’s press secretary laughing and giggling during a mock press conference further confirms the casual attitude to the threat of the virus. I am sure there were plenty of other unlawful gatherings during lockdowns but I find the ones that took place in Downing Street particularly egregious.

3. Pursuing the wrong strategy

As a direct consequence of failures 1 and 2 entirely the wrong strategy was adopted to combat the virus. Instead of striving to eliminate the virus altogether it was clearly felt early on that this could not be achieved and the best policy would be to reduce its threat to life as much as possible. Inevitably, as Johnson stated, people would lose their loved ones but such loss of life could be kept to a minimum through the introduction of restrictions. Mitigation rather than suppression became the strategy of the UK government and most governments globally and it was accepted this would mean that lives would be lost.

I remain bewildered and dismayed that, as far as I recall, this strategy went unchallenged by politicians across parties. As early as September 2020 I was writing a post forcefully putting the case for eliminating the virus:

As long as the virus is with us life will not return to normal. Which is why it must be eliminated – not controlled, nor managed nor accepted as an inevitable fact of life. Eliminated, eradicated, exterminated, killed off,

destroyed. It may not be possible to kill it off completely but we can come very close.

How can we do this? By changing our mindset about it in two ways. First, we must believe we can come close to killing it off. We must have high expectations of ourselves that we can do this if together we all make a determined effort, as determined as we have ever made before in peacetime. As individuals each one of us must take on the challenge so that collectively we succeed.

And to succeed we must change our mindsets in another way. We must not think that life is now getting more or less back to normal. It is not ...

I remain convinced that the only ethical and compassionate strategy for society to pursue is to try and virtually eliminate the virus, which means chasing it down properly. This approach saved an incalculable number of lives in countries such as New Zealand, Australia, Taiwan and Singapore, and probably as many as over 4 million in China.

I presented the compelling evidence for this in early July 2021 when I compared the death toll of 150,000 for the UK with that of other countries:

4/7/21

ELIMINATION STRATEGY WORKS: Evidence

Death tolls in countries which have done this:

New Zealand 26 Australia 910 Singapore 36

Vietnam 76 UK 150,000

Since mistakenly abandoning their elimination strategy in favour of a living with Covid policy these countries have sadly suffered great loss of life which, as elsewhere, has been entirely avoidable. But having kept the virus under control before the vaccines became available their total mortalities are far fewer than those of other countries.

4. Normalisation of horrific death toll

The normalisation of the horrific and growing death toll seen in daily and weekly statistics was, and is, a major factor in not persuading everyone to be sufficiently cautious and vigilant with regard to the virus. Numbers and statistics are difficult to process empathetically when they are presented simply as raw data. They need to be placed in the context of human stories with real people in true life situations as in the early days of the pandemic when television cameras were allowed into Covid wards.

The normalisation of numbers has probably added to the collective and individual denial about the seriousness of Covid that seems to have been growing amongst more and more people.

A further consequence of normalising the huge number of deaths from Covid has been that when the death toll was reduced as a result of the vaccine roll-out many people believed the pandemic was over. It was in the past and they could use the past tense to discuss it. Compared with the peaks of mortalities the numbers have clearly been much better, as indeed they should have been, but this should not be the comparison to use for the purpose of seeing whether the pandemic is over. The only valid comparison is with pre-pandemic mortalities and infections which were, of course, zero. If the present numbers had existed in 2019 they would certainly have been considered a pandemic.

5. Lack of national unity

Although during the early part of the first lockdown there seemed to be a feeling of coming together in order to protect each other from the devastation the virus was inflicting on society this unity was gradually eroded. The rainbows, the clapping for the NHS, the respectful social distancing and later the masking, gave way to increasingly vocal dissent that the restrictions were too draconian and removed individual liberties. Despite this, according to the opinion

polls, most people remained in favour of keeping restrictions which should have been a reason to listen to this viewpoint rather than its opposite.

A lack of a sense of national unity contributed to a divisive atmosphere in which our response to Covid was discussed and enacted. From the start of the pandemic and throughout it was essential that everyone came together to fight the virus by behaving in a thoughtful, disciplined and caring manner. Sadly it seemed to me that the leadership required to bring this about was absent from the government, politicians from all parties, and those in other influential positions such as church leaders, the royal family and celebrities.

6. Shortcomings in media coverage

From what I have heard, seen and read the media coverage of the pandemic in the UK has too often been harmful rather than helpful. With the exception of the Guardian, the Independent and the Mirror, the print media in traditional and digital formats has either minimised, or been dismissive of, the gravity of the situation.

Coverage has been better in the broadcast media which initially conveyed well the sheer horror of Covid here and abroad. It regularly kept us informed about the number of deaths and vaccinations and reported on the progress of the vaccine rollout.

But with regard to the BBC output on television and radio it seemed to me that presenters were unwilling to ask the really difficult questions to interviewees about, for example, the number of mortalities that could result from delaying a lockdown or relaxing restrictions too soon. These interviewees would normally be government ministers, other MPs, spokespeople from the hospitality industry, and scientists. On 21 August I wrote to the director general of the BBC to register my concern about its coverage and the fact that

this leaned towards giving anti-lockdown views too much prominence, as in this extract:

As well as lacking robust analysis in its news coverage the impression has also been strongly conveyed from the start of the pandemic that lifting restrictions was a cause for rejoicing – very much what the government wished for. There were far too many vox pops with people immediately returning to pubs and nightclubs or going on holiday. News presenters frequently shared in their general joviality without asking how they felt about the likelihood that they would be spreading infections. Many deaths could have been prevented if, for example, there had not been wild celebrations at fan zones during the European football championships.

Given that opinion polls consistently showed that the majority of the public, over 70% on occasions, were in favour of being much more cautious in lifting restrictions than was government policy, there should have been a significant weighting in this direction.

Apart from the tendency to minimise the impact of the pandemic within its content the other way in which the media lessened the impact was to allow other news stories to dominate the headlines. There was nothing unusual about this, of course, as when it comes to news of any sort our boredom thresholds are low. Some of this news was connected to Covid such as stories about Tom Moore, Dominic Cummings and school exams, and some of it covered other subjects including Brexit, Trump and Afghanistan. This year understandably there has been huge coverage of the war in Ukraine and the death of Queen Elizabeth.

All these stories diverted attention away from the Covid story which, however unappealing, should have been kept in full focus throughout. In the past six months or so there has been very little coverage of Covid on mainstream media and most of my information has come from following a number of outstanding scientists posting regular updates on Twitter.

Unfortunately this particular social media platform has also been a source of false information regarding the ineffectiveness of vaccines

and masks, and there has been little attempt to ensure that untrue content is removed instantly.

Assessing the influence of the media on individual and collective behaviour is extremely difficult and even the most rigorous academic research is unlikely to produce definitive results. But given the propensity of human beings to accept what others are saying without too much questioning I would suggest that, generally speaking, the media has contributed to the UK's failure to keep the death toll from Covid as low as possible.

7. Inadequate information and guidance from the government

Except during periods of lockdown the information, advice and strong guidance from the government has been wholly inadequate. Since the lifting of restrictions in February 2022 it has been virtually non-existent. The government has deliberately not been properly informing the public about the virus and the necessary precautions to take because it wishes to reinforce the belief that the pandemic is over and we can all live with the virus safely. Although information is available on the government's Coronavirus website and other websites this is not sufficient as I imagine not many people choose to seek it out.

An enormous public information campaign to tell people precisely what was happening and to advise them firmly what to do and how to behave should have been in place continually after the first lockdown.

8. Human frailties

Behind all the shortcomings in our individual and collective responses to the pandemic are the human frailties and failings we all have – and which are often behind many of the shortcomings we have in our lives generally. Four of these are especially relevant to our behaviour during the Covid crisis: self-interest; shortage of compassion; shortage of wisdom; and self-indulgence.

i) Self-interest

It is a natural human instinct to want to do the best for oneself and one's family. Provided this is not at the expense of others this is usually accepted as legitimate self-interest. Most of us have regarded breaking Covid restrictions as endangering the lives and health of other people and for this reason being unacceptable, but some have put self-interest first and ignored restrictions. I do not regard this as legitimate self-interest.

ii) Shortage of compassion

A shortage of compassion among some people, especially for the elderly and vulnerable, has made a substantial contribution to the spread of infection and appalling death toll. I have read and heard far too many unpleasant comments to the effect that somehow the lives of older people are less valuable than those of younger age groups because they have lived a long life which is coming to a close in the natural way. In the context of managing Covid the implication of this grotesque belief has been to allow the idea to circulate that society cannot be disrupted just to protect the elderly who happen to be more likely to die from the virus.

Irrespective of the complete lack of compassion in devaluing the lives of the elderly on the basis of their age I have yet to discover any logic in this argument. There are over 9 million people older than 70, with over 3 million of them older than 80, who are leading fulfilling lives and making an enormous contribution to society. Many will probably be enjoying their retirement in ways they have looked forward to, and some will still be working – maybe in the entertainment or business world. Others will be helping out with grandchildren or perhaps have a caring role with their spouse or partner.

It could well be the case that many elderly people feel they are enjoying life as much as ever before which therefore could make it even more valuable and precious since there is less of it left. The

notion that older people should be sacrificed for the sake of the young, or that it is less of a tragedy if they die from Covid, must be one of the most repugnant beliefs ever expressed in modern society. It should have been denounced as such by the government, politicians, the media and Church leaders whenever it was stated or implied.

I will cite three examples of this abhorrent view being expressed. The first is by a prominent backbench MP during the lockdown debate in December 2020.

Every year, 615,000 people die in this country, and not every death is a tragedy. It is so distressing when I hear leaders of political parties, leaders of communities and leaders in this place say that every death was a tragedy. A tragedy is when a child dies. A tragedy is when some young woman or young man dies, or when someone is cut down in their middle years. When we say it is a tragedy that someone at 80 or 90 has met their mortality, we diminish that life so well lived. We diminish the love. We diminish the way that that person was cherished and valued. Please can we change the narrative when we talk about death? Not all deaths are equal—there is the same outcome, but to compare the death of someone of 90 with the death of someone of 19 is not right.

I find his point about diminishing life and love specious humbug, and his point comparing the death of a 19 year old with a 90 year old I find heartless and irrational. I would say it would be tragic if a 90 year old in good health and about to celebrate her 60th wedding anniversary with husband, children and grandchildren, were struck down with Covid and died. It would be as tragic as the death of a 19 year old who killed himself and his passenger in a car accident resulting from being well over the alcohol limit.

I used the words heartless and irrational in a tweet after I heard a later comment from the same MP which I have not been able to track down but the content of which is clear:

Appallingly heartless and uncaring comments from ... Also irrational and intellectually flawed. If that's what he thinks of his more elderly constituents he should resign as an MP.

Equally unpleasant were comments in a similar vein from a retired Supreme Court judge now sitting in the House of Lords. They were made on a radio programme in March 2021 and included this statement:

It is not worth completely wrecking the future of our children's generation in order to save that many lives.

And finally there is this not very charming reply to one of my tweets:

Oh piss off you wet blanket. No one is interested in your nano Covid plan or ideas. The average age of death of these people will be well north of 75 and they'd have died of anything. I'm not having myself or my son miss out on stuff so 90 year olds can live 3 months longer.

I like to think that the three people who expressed these views, and anyone else who agreed with them, will one day reflect on what they said and realise how uncaring they were. And if anyone at the heart of government ever did use the phrase "let the bodies pile high" that person, too, should reflect on his or her values.

Fortunately for humanity a heart-warming abundance of kindness and caring has far outweighed the deficits in compassion and empathy. Having been told in a late night text that I had been identified as being at risk of severe illness if I caught Coronavirus and that I should pack a hospital bag and stay at home for a minimum of 12 weeks, I will be forever grateful for the personal support I received from friends and family during the first few weeks of lockdown. They did my shopping for food and medication as did volunteers from local support groups. I am sure this sort of help was being provided all over the country.

Neither must we ever forget the massive selfless contribution provided by our key workers – those who defied the virus and carried on working in essential services such as health and social care, the provision of food and groceries, public transport, policing, maintaining utilities and education. All heroes. We can never repay them enough.

iii) *Shortage of wisdom*

My definition of wisdom is that essentially it is a blend of rational thinking and common sense.

It was, and still is, a desperate shortage of wisdom when it was most needed that has been a further decisive factor in our collective failure to control Covid. The deficiency has been evident in our political leaders and amongst all of us, myself definitely included. Except for extreme right-wing libertarians and conspiracy theorists we have mostly been too willing to allow herd instincts and deference to override our capacity to think things through carefully. We have meekly followed our leaders come what may.

Given the evidence from other countries about how lethal the virus was and how quickly it spread it was not a rational decision to delay the first and subsequent lockdowns. Delaying until January the lockdown that was urgently required in December 2020 was a complete abdication of logic and tragically resulted in a huge loss of life, peaking on 19th January 2021 with 1490 deaths that day.

Delaying lockdowns, lifting them too soon and not making them completely watertight, were all indications of the wrong strategy being pursued – mitigation rather than suppression and elimination. Given it was always common sense that reducing human contact was the most effective way to stop the virus spreading there was no reason why this should not have been the basis for an elimination strategy. The evidence from the first UK lockdown and lockdowns in other countries confirmed how effective they were.

I suspect it was because of the success of the first lockdown that we were lulled into a false sense of security and dropped our guard. Although I did not participate in the scheme I was relaxed about the “Eat Out to Help Out” idea in August 2020 whereby the government subsidised eating out in order to support the hospitality industry. Similarly it appeared safe to take holidays at home and abroad. In

retrospect these were not sensible activities and contributed to the start of the next wave of infection.

Moving on to July 2021 it was a disastrous error of judgement by Javid to lift restrictions. Since then there have been 83,000 Covid deaths. Surrender day, as I call it, on 24th February 2022, was also disastrous and unbelievably foolish. Since this date, when all legal Covid restrictions were removed, 50,000 people have died from the virus and there has been yet more serious illness.

One of the early errors of judgement by our political leaders was not to come together and form a government of national unity. There was clearly no place for tribal politics when the whole country was threatened and everyone had a shared interest in protecting each other. The opposition parties were right to support the government's restrictions but if government and opposition MPs had been allowed to think and speak freely as individuals representing all their constituents and not just local business interests, they would probably have concluded that the country needed a much stronger response to Covid throughout the pandemic.

Moreover a unity government would have been the most visible way to show the importance of coming together as a society to fight the virus. Instead we saw a continuation of politics as usual with the totally inappropriate spectacle of Johnson and Starmer trying to score points at Prime Minister's Questions and their supporters baying at each other across the chamber.

Sadly for the country when MPs did come together to discuss the situation calmly and rationally in the cross-party committee referred to above it had no effect on the future management of the crisis. The committee produced a report which contained a great deal of wisdom which very unwisely was ignored.

One of the reasons why it was ignored is that the issue of restricting people's liberty had become increasingly contentious. Too many people were listening to the views of the libertarian right – views

which clearly they were entitled to express but which were not fully exposed for their lack of intellectual rigour. Without embarking on a philosophical discussion on the subject of human liberty the views lacked rigour for a number of obvious reasons: no human being, or any other life form for that matter, has absolute biological freedom; all humans, and all species of social animal, have to live either by the instinctive behaviours or basic social norms of the societies into which they are born or they would not survive; and as was quite rightly pointed out on Twitter no one has the freedom to inflict harm on others – or, as was also said, we don't allow terrorists to roam the streets with lethal weapons.

Not having the freedom to inflict harm on others is more or less what Mill was saying a hundred and fifty years ago but it has, of course, been the basis of the rule of law for rather longer than this.

I like my liberty as much as anyone but I found it deeply unsettling that those who were constantly bleating about it, such as MPs in the Covid Recovery Group, never seemed to give a thought for those who had lost their ultimate liberty – their life.

No doubt there are many more examples of the effect of deficiencies in rational thinking and common sense but two will suffice.

One is the assortment of views on vaccines, masks and conspiracies. I would argue that it defies reason to believe that vaccination against Covid is not an effective treatment which protects all age groups against serious illness and death. I understand the reasons why some people are so strongly opposed to it but the scientific and empirical evidence for its effectiveness is overwhelming. There is similar very powerful evidence for the effectiveness of masks. As for believing in conspiracy theories, to which I imagine many anti-vaxxers and anti-maskers subscribe, this goes beyond irrational thinking and into the issue of disrupted states of mind.

And finally a second deficiency in clear thinking and common sense can be seen in the way the provision of education was managed. It

was the right decision to close schools and colleges during the peaks of the pandemic and to keep most children at home. But it was not necessary to attempt to teach them the normal curriculum. It would have been far less stressful for families if, instead of individual schools providing online lessons, the education department had organised some flexible programmes of learning which, as well as emphasising the basics, contained plenty of ideas to excite and motivate children in different subjects.

As we have entered the hallowed portals of education I cannot help but wonder if the way we have been educating ourselves over many generations has best prepared us to face disasters such as Covid. I have long argued that as a society we need to transform the school curriculum to ensure that critical thinking is made one of its priorities. All good citizens must be able to weigh up arguments and evidence logically and objectively, understand their own prejudices, challenge received wisdom and above all be willing to reflect on their own beliefs and admit to being wrong.

And all good human beings must also be educated, either at home, at school or elsewhere, in values and character to enable them to be truthful, honest, disciplined, determined and, above all, to be kind.

iv) Self-indulgence

There is one final group of shortcomings in our character and behaviour which I believe has contributed to the unbelievably tragic failure of the UK and many other countries to protect lives during the pandemic. These shortcomings can be brought together under the heading “self-indulgence”, which, a while ago, I decided to call the 4 Ms: Me, Me and More, More.

It is a character failing I possess as much as anyone else. Perhaps it has always been a human failing but it seems to have become more pronounced in the decades following the Second World War. A combination of more disposable income and material prosperity for many and a gradual erosion of traditional norms in sexual

relationships are probably two of the main factors in the widespread belief that life is about wanting more possessions, holidays, leisure activities and different experiences of every kind.

If this is the case it is not surprising that our rights within society often seem to receive more attention than our responsibilities; that in the context of Covid our right to be free and not have restrictions imposed upon us by the government has been regarded by some as more important than our responsibilities.

It is my belief that the arguments above represent the failures, mistakes and shortcomings in the UK's response to Covid which have resulted in so many avoidable deaths and so much avoidable suffering and anguish. It is likely that these shortcomings will have been evident in many other parts of the world.

They must be acknowledged and accepted with due humility so that we can learn from them in order to improve how society functions and is organised in normal times. I hope an honest recognition of our mistakes in managing this pandemic will also ensure they are not repeated when we are called upon to confront a future pandemic or similar national emergency.

But at the moment, however, there is one overwhelming reason why we must learn from our mistakes. It is in order to deal with the present pandemic, the present national and global emergency.

Incredibly, at the moment it seems to me we have learned very little from the mistakes that have been made over the past three years. We seem to be making the same mistakes I have identified above. We must stop doing this now. It is only by not repeating the mistakes of the past that we will finally win the war against Covid.

We must acknowledge the huge errors of judgement that have been made and learn from them. Which means we must do the opposite of where we have fallen short. And the opposite of these errors is to:

- Put lives first
- Recognise the seriousness of the pandemic
- Pursue the right strategy
- Never normalise the death toll
- Build a spirit of national unity
- Ensure better media coverage
- Be supplied with greatly improved Information, advice and guidance from the government
- Find and use a surfeit of wisdom and a surfeit of compassion

This is what we must do and we must do it now.

Change 3 – to switch from a mindset of defeat to a mindset of victory

Can it be done? Is it really possible to rid the world of Covid? Or is this just a fantasy for a few of us but one in which most people are not interested because they are comfortable with the present situation?

The answer is, it is certainly possible. And when people understand this they will realise they do not need to follow the living with Covid strategy which has resulted in so many avoidable deaths and so much avoidable illness.

We will rid the world of Covid in two ways: by having new science and having new behaviour. We will not rid the world of Covid by continuing with the present policy.

Vaccines have been a truly amazing scientific achievement which have saved millions of lives throughout the world. Unfortunately they are not yet able to prevent transmission of the virus and the immunity they provide seems not to last long. Nor is the natural immunity which is acquired through catching Covid proving successful in reducing transmissions. What this herd immunity has not done is significantly reduce deaths or serious illness.

As for hoping it will mutate into something less lethal there is nothing wrong in being hopeful, as I am, but we have to be realistic and accept this may simply be wishful thinking.

The only way to defeat the virus is to use the weapon systems we already have but revive and upgrade them in line with what we now know about the enemy. Our science has been superb but it has more to give. Our behaviour has often only been average and has a lot more to give.

New science

It is essential to keep the benefits that science has given us. The work done by scientists throughout the world has been truly amazing. We must be forever grateful for what they have done and must preserve their achievements.

We must therefore continue to monitor the evolution of Covid and investigate new variants. We must maintain and expand the vaccination programme, ensure that effective medical treatments are readily available and restore our testing system to being fully operational again. Research should be undertaken to see if masks and filtration devices can be made even more effective than they presently are.

I can think of four ideas for new scientific developments in the war against Covid. One is to find ways to prevent it being transmitted, such as nasal sprays or sucking a lozenge. A second is to develop a reliable instant test which only involves breathing into a small plastic or cardboard disposable tube. This would be administered when attending indoor gatherings or even shops, offices or other people's homes. The third piece of new science we need is a device to indicate whether there is Covid present in any given space inside or outside, and a fourth is to find a substance to kill off any virus in this space.

Funding for these ideas, and any other research which will be useful, should be made available immediately.

New behaviour

Although it was not universally the case behaviour was at its best during the first lockdown in March 2020. It has seemed to me that since then there has been a steady decline in self-discipline and concern for others. Boris Johnson and his government must bear much of the responsibility for this by not providing the exemplary but firm leadership that was required. Delaying future lockdowns and talk of freedom days conveyed the impression that the virus was under control and we could be more relaxed about it. The living with Covid strategy has, of course, strongly reinforced this impression.

It was Johnson's leadership, or rather his lack of it, that brought about the appeasement, retreat and surrender in the war against the virus which allowed such dreadful carnage to be inflicted on the UK. He and his government were absolutely right to introduce the first lockdown and those that followed, but they were brought in late, were not tight enough and were not firmly enforced. And if some of the restrictions of the first lockdown had been continued there is every likelihood that Covid could have been brought under control by the end of August 2020. Instead we appeased each other by relaxing restrictions and we appeased the virus at the same time.

The financial support given to individuals and businesses was also the right action to take and if this means higher taxes for many of us to repay the money borrowed by the government we should not be objecting.

Mass vaccination was undoubtedly a strategy that was clearly essential and which has saved countless lives. However, the belief that it was going to be the ultimate magic potion led to complacency and the view that behavioural mitigations were less important. I imagine that most people mistakenly believed, as I did, that the immunity provided by the vaccines stopped you catching Covid and would therefore stop it being transmitted. When this proved not to be the case the government should have been completely open with the

public and said it would still be necessary to retain certain mandatory restrictions in addition to the vaccines, in order to provide protection for everyone.

Appeasement of the virus continued and as happened with a previous infamous act of appeasement it did not bring “peace for our time.” It has, in fact, led to victory for the virus which is still out of control and circulating widely; victory for the virus but defeat and surrender for humanity.

Most people in the UK, encouraged by the government, probably do not feel that living with Covid is living with defeat. They can live with Covid because they see that vaccines have reduced mortalities from the peaks of the pandemic. They may not have given much thought to what an acceptable level these should be.

They talk about the pandemic in the past tense and are generally not concerned about catching Covid. From my experience it is no longer a burning topic of conversation and it has long since ceased to be of interest to the mainstream media.

One item of Covid conversation does, however, continue to crop up on Twitter as it has throughout. It is the spurious argument that compares Covid deaths with flu and other deaths, such as cancer and heart attacks, and draws the conclusion that because we have learned to live with these mortalities we should do the same for Covid. Except in the obvious sense mentioned below, and leaving aside the dubiously high numbers that seem to be cited, this is not a valid argument.

It is not valid first of all because although individuals have to live with life-threatening illnesses society does not. As a society we are, for example, constantly striving to find cures for cancer and advance our treatments for those who have heart problems. The other reason it is not a valid argument is because, unlike cancer, Covid is a disease that is largely avoidable. As for comparing deaths from Covid with deaths

from flu we should perhaps be saying that the latter are also largely avoidable and looking to reducing these to a bare minimum too.

In one obvious sense, of course, we do have to learn to live with everything because that is the nature of life. As is frequently pointed out we would not be able to get up in the morning if we were anxious about everything that could happen to us by way of illnesses or accidents. But we are mostly programmed not to be anxious about our mortality and we can also draw comfort from the safety nets provided by our fellow humans – those who work in the emergency services and health professionals together with ordinary people who are carers, or who dive into the sea to save someone from drowning.

Controlling the spread of Covid has required sacrifices to be made by everyone for the sake of others. At some point in our lives we have all had to make sacrifices of one sort or another for other people, often our loved ones who have needed support. If we are able to do this for our loved ones I cannot see why we should not be doing it for everyone in the society to which we belong. We should be able to put up with inconveniences and some discomfort both because of an innate instinct to help one another and because we are dependent on each other as members of society.

The sacrifices most people have been asked to make in order to control Covid have not been too onerous. It has surely only been a small sacrifice to be asked to wear a mask on public transport or in an indoor space. It does not compare with the massively heroic sacrifices being made on a daily basis by soldiers and civilians in Ukraine.

Nor does it compare with the sacrifices made by our own soldiers and civilians during the Second World War. They made these sacrifices because Churchill did not say “we must learn to live under the Nazis”. He said the opposite: “We shall never surrender”.

We will never rid the UK or the world of Covid if we surrender to it. We must fight it all the way. We must mount an immediate counter-

offensive which will involve a small amount of sacrifice but large amounts of personal responsibility and collective obligation.

The strategy for the offensive will be based on a very simple truth about the virus which has not yet been instilled into everyone in the UK, or the world, as much as it should have been. We have known from the beginning that the virus affects different people in different ways. We can have no symptoms, mild symptoms or severe symptoms if we catch it. At its worst it is a killer. It is because most of us understood the threat it posed to our loved ones and ourselves that for a long time we tried hard to avoid catching it.

But because of vaccines, and the immunity acquired from having had Covid as has happened to many people, it is no longer seen as a dangerous personal threat. This mistaken perception, encouraged by the government, is why the living with Covid strategy is proving to have such tragic consequences. If people are reluctant at present to see Covid as a personal threat or a threat to their own families then, for their sake and the sake of wider society, we must all move away from just thinking about ourselves to thinking about each other. **Our moral motivation must shift to a position where we avoid catching Covid because that will be for the greater good of society.**

How does this work? It works because the very simple truth about the virus I have just mentioned is this: if no one catches Covid no one will be able to spread it. No getting it, no spreading it. It's as simple as that.

So as individuals and families we must do our utmost not to get Covid. Everyone must see it as their moral duty not to catch it which is the opposite of the casual attitude which prevails at present. We must see it as a personal mission not to catch the virus, behaviour which requires a great deal of personal responsibility and a great sense of collective obligation.

We should also see this moral duty as a personal challenge which will be part of bigger challenges – the challenge to eliminate the virus

from our local communities, from our national communities and from our global community. It will be a challenge where our successes in reducing infections, hospitalisations and deaths will be recorded daily by local councils, national governments and the World Health Organisation.

On the whole taking part in the challenge will be voluntary but there will probably be some situations where certain behaviour will need to be made mandatory. Although voluntary there will be an expectation that everyone will participate because they will fully understand their moral and social obligations.

I have called the behaviour “new behaviour” because it is new in the sense that it is voluntary and comes from ourselves and our own capacity for compassion, kindness and self-discipline. It comes from the goodness in our own characters that we all possess and ultimately all wish to be used for good purposes. It comes from our own wisdom and experience and does not involve accepting foolish advice from the government, or anyone else, about learning to live with Covid for example. It may require some reinforcing from outside ourselves on occasions by having some rules and precepts we need to adhere to as well as having peer pressure about what is socially unacceptable but, essentially it is behaviour that comes from within.

The new behaviour must also embrace the lessons we must learn from our response to the pandemic which have been identified above.

What will not be new behaviour is the specific Covid related conduct we must follow in order to get rid of the virus. This has become all too familiar during the past three years which should make it much easier to do.

We must keep our distance from each other as much as possible, inside and outside. We should try to make this at least two metres. Except for immediate family and loved ones we should stop hugging one another. We do not need to embrace people we meet and footballers, and fans, do not need to celebrate a goal with wild

entanglements. On the whole we should try to reduce our interactions with people in the real world which may mean we are more selective in the gatherings we attend or visits we make. It does not mean we need to become reclusive.

Wearing a mask in many places and situations must become the norm again. They must be worn in all health care settings, in shops and supermarkets, on any form of transport, in enclosed spaces, in schools, colleges and universities, in our homes by visitors or tradespeople, in cars and taxis, and, if crowded, in outdoor areas. Public figures must set an example by wearing masks when carrying out engagements and MPs must do the same in parliament. The government must send every household a free supply of best quality masks which will need to be replenished as necessary.

The evidence on the effectiveness of masks in reducing Covid transmission is extremely powerful and I have no doubt in my own mind that masks save lives. Those who do not wear them need to ask themselves why they are putting the lives of their fellow humans at risk. It is not, after all, a great hardship to have a mask on.

If for some reason, such as being outside, people find themselves not wearing a mask they must not sneeze or cough if there is anyone close to them and nor must they breathe over anyone.

Ventilation and hand-sanitising should continue and wiping down items brought into the home should be reintroduced.

Testing kits should be given to every household and everyone who tests positive must self-isolate and accept an electronic tag from the local council to ensure they do so. Financial support will be provided on condition that a monitoring tag will be worn.

There should be no need for evening curfews but drinking in moderation will be strongly advised.

Protective “stay-homes” for parts of the country may be needed which could be mandatory if necessary. If we are winning the war

against Covid, as we will be if we change our behaviour, stay-homes should only need to be used occasionally and for the most part be localised. They should be prepared for in advance and those affected must be given everything to make them a comfortable experience.

The challenge to everyone not to get Covid must receive a massive amount of media coverage at a local, national and global level. The fightback against the virus will be one of the greatest human endeavours ever seen if everyone plays their part. And this is how it must constantly be promoted by every media outlet. Funds must be made available for this from local and national government but small, medium and large businesses, as well as NGOs and charities, must also provide a large amount of the funding. It will clearly be in their own interests to prevent the continuing, avoidable disruption to society and the economy.

Support from well-known local and public figures should be enlisted. Celebrities from the worlds of sport and entertainment should be asked to broadcast messages saying how they are meeting the challenge. Politicians must put aside tribal conflict and replace it with the unity of purpose that is required – and always has been. Faith leaders from different religions must be prominent in the fightback locally and nationally. The royal family must do a great deal more than it has done previously to prevent the virus harming and killing the king's subjects.

Covid will not go away on its own. It will not go away by ignoring it and, most importantly, it will not go away by deluding ourselves that it is no longer the threat to humanity that it was. Individual and collective denial about Covid is the threat to humanity.

It is not deliberate denial and nor are we aware as individuals that we are in denial. If we are getting on with other things in our lives we do not spend time thinking of Covid unless there are medical reasons to do so. Moreover, we are happy to put it into the past because in

different ways it has been such a traumatic experience for many people.

But however much we might like to believe it no longer a threat the reality is the opposite. The pandemic is not over in our country or anywhere else in the world. It continues to bring immeasurable suffering and anguish to millions of people and is still disrupting society hugely,

We cannot carry on doing nothing about it. If we want to get rid of the virus it must be confronted and defeated. The only way to defeat it is to chase it down and ensure it has nowhere to hide. It will have nowhere to hide if we keep it out of our bodies. Not getting it is not spreading it.

We must all make it our mission not to get it. We know what to do and none of it is that difficult. We must not surrender.

So it's masks on, keeping our distance, reducing our contacts, and cutting down on our hugs.

And it's also an abundance of determination, self-discipline, the power of kindness and the power of love.

Notes:

For previous posts, letters, emails and tweets see:

https://www.quercuspublications.co.uk/links_to_coronavirus_comments.html

1 https://www.quercuspublications.co.uk/nano_covid.html

2 See: The Corona Virus crisis at:

https://www.quercuspublications.co.uk/thoughts_on_51_-_55.html

3 Note added 4/6/23: I'm now uneasy about these numbers and my preference is to use the numbers 71,404 for deaths from Covid since July 2021 and 39,430 since February 2022.