OOPS – Scientist Who Predicted 500,000 COVID-19 Deaths in UK Now Estimates 20,000 or Less

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Scientist and Imperial College author Neil Ferguson several weeks ago warned that the coronavirus would kill 500,000 people in the United Kingdom. He now says that, if all goes as expected, the death toll will be 20,000 people or fewer. Ferguson has tested positive for COVID-19 and is not expecting to die. He credited the UK's lockdown for stopping the spread of the virus, but the country only began its lockdown 2 days ago, and the theory is that lockdowns, if they work at all, take at least two weeks to create a measurable impact. -GEG

A scientist who warned that the coronavirus would kill 500,000 people in the United Kingdom has presented evidence that if current measures work as expected the death toll would drop to roughly 20,000 people or fewer.

Scientist and Imperial College author Neil Ferguson said Wednesday the coronavirus death toll is unlikely to exceed 20,000 and could be much lower if lockdown measures continue, according to *New Scientist*. He added that he is "reasonably confident" that Britain's health system can handle the burden of treating coronavirus patients.

"There will be some areas that are extremely stressed, but we are reasonably confident – which is all we can be at the current time – that at the national level we will be within capacity," Ferguson said.

The Imperial College had previously warned of modeling that suggested over 500,000 would die from the virus.

"This is a remarkable turn from Neil Ferguson, who led the @imperialcollege authors who

warned of 500,000 UK deaths – and who has now himself tested positive for #COVID," former *New York Times* reporter Alex Berenson wrote on Twitter.

Ferguson credited the U.K.'s lockdown for stopping the spread of the virus, but as Berenson points out, the country "only began its lockdown 2 days ago, and the theory is that lockdowns take 2 weeks or more to work." New data shows that the transmission rate of the virus, the measure of how many other people a carrier usually infects, is up from 2.5 to just over three, Ferguson said.

"That adds more evidence to support the more intensive social distancing measures," he said.

Fox News host Laura Ingraham said on Twitter following the revised projections, "Now that we are seeing that the ICU bed & vent projections from orig Imperial College study are almost certainly WRONG, it is critical that we think immed about staggered, gradual opening of our country with new protocols."

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