

COVID-19 coronavirus could 'die out' on its own without a vaccine, health expert suggests

Prof Matteo Bassetti, head of the infectious diseases clinic at the Policlinico San Martino hospital in Italy, told The Telegraph that Covid-19 has been losing its virulence in the last month and patients who would have previously died are now recovering.

[Editor's note: Some health experts are suggesting the newest versions of the coronavirus are less lethal, suggesting it could die out on its own.]

The expert in critical care said the plummeting number of cases could mean a vaccine is no longer needed as the virus might never return.

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"The clinical impression I have is that the virus is changing in severity," said Prof Bassetti.

"In March and early April the patterns were completely different."

[newsletter]

"Now, in the past four weeks, the picture has completely changed in terms of patterns. There could be a lower viral load in the respiratory tract, probably due to a genetic mutation in the virus which has not yet been demonstrated scientifically."

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However, Dr Bharat Pankhania, a senior clinical lecturer at the University of Exeter Medical School and a former Public Health England consultant, said the idea that Covid-19 would die out is "optimistic in the short term".

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"It will if it has no one to infect. If we have a successful vaccine then we'll be able to do what we did with smallpox. But because it's so infectious and widespread, it won't go away for a very long time.

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