

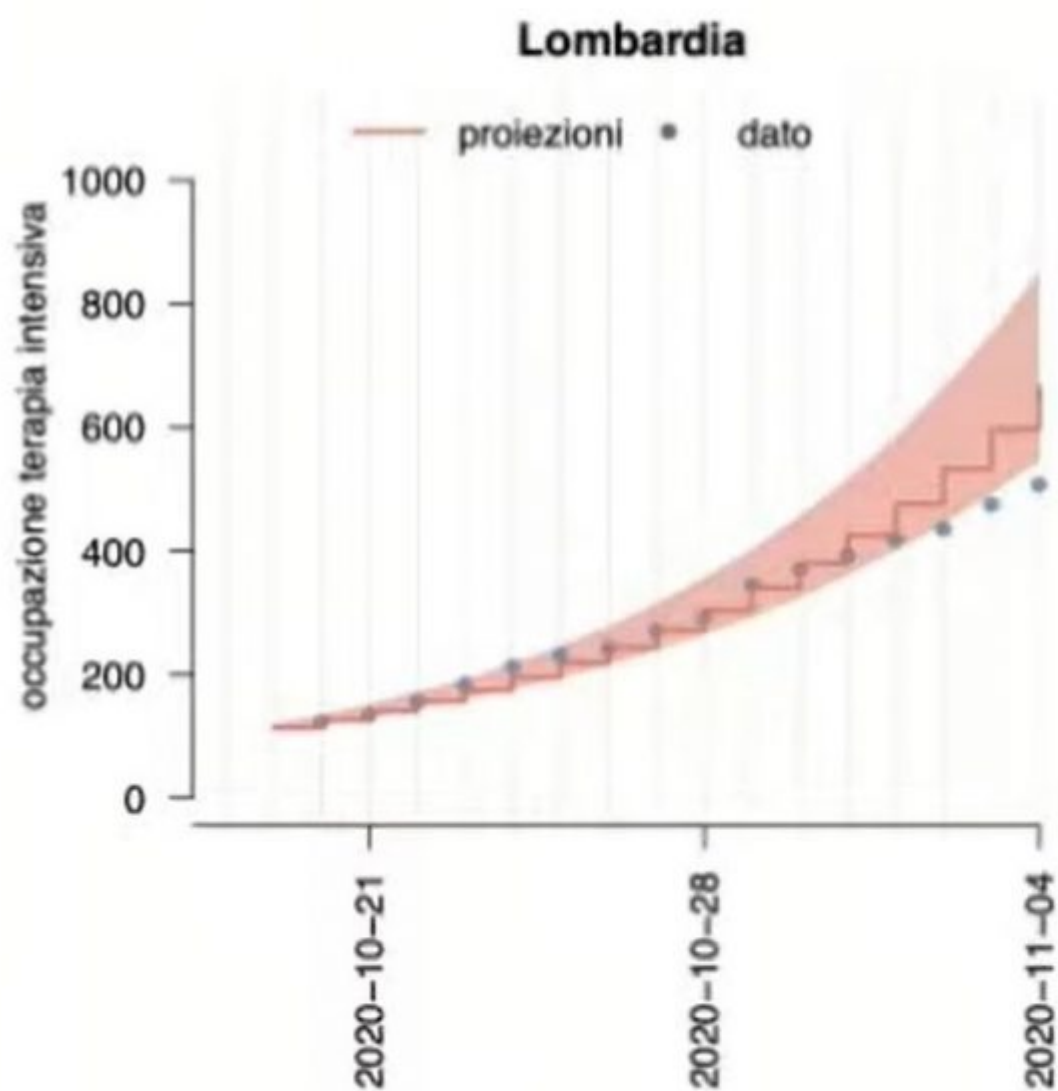
Covid-19: what can the Rt number tell us and why is it so important?

November 17, 2020

As information that questioned the validity of the infection metrics used spread, the Ministry of Health held a press conference where FBK researcher Stefano Merler spoke to shed light on some concepts

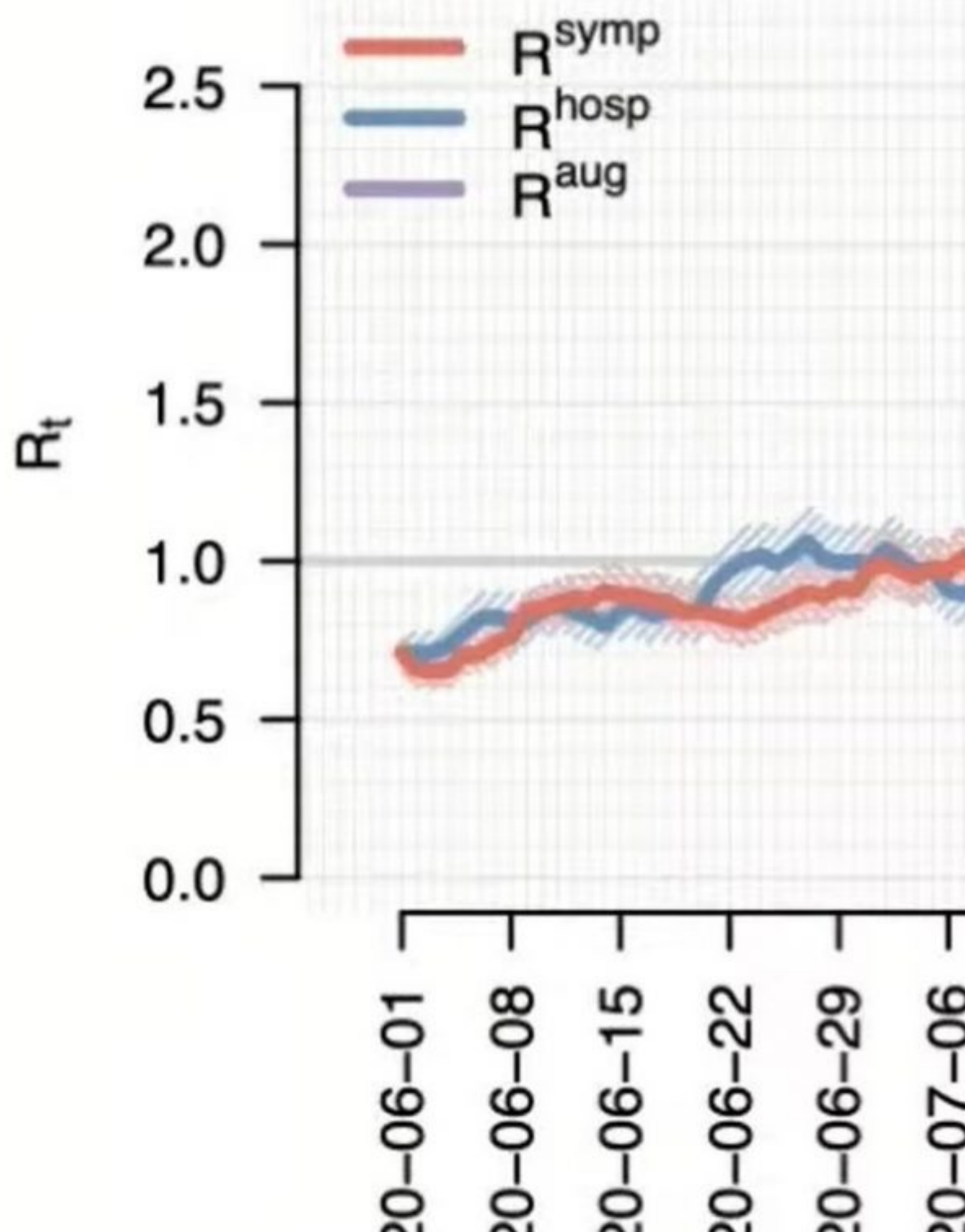
The first of which is precisely the importance of calculating the Rt number: *"It is the only one of the 21 indicators capable of helping us understand the epidemic's trend. **We often start arguing about numbers, but we forget what their real meaning is which, in our case, is being able to tell what will happen in the next two weeks.** It is clearly a system that brings with it uncertainties – said our researcher – but it is the best tool available to us, solidly built over the years and widely recognized by the scientific community".* During the press conference introduced by the President of the Higher Health Council, Silvio Brusaferro, Merler also showed for the first time a graph with the estimates made for the period from October 13 to early November. Prediction band estimates are shown in red, while the dotted line shows how intensive care bed occupancy has progressed, with both trends largely coinciding. **A graph that highlights the validity of the Rt number compared to what is the most important issue produced by Covid-19, namely pressure on the health system.**

Proiezioni di



In the past few days, some media argued that a lower R_t number was due to the inability of the monitoring system to track asymptomatic individuals. But, as we can see from the following graph which shows data from June to November, **the R_t number trend for hospitalized (blue line) and symptomatics (red line) is almost the same**, with a difference between the two lines due to the greater numbers of young people among those infected with symptoms.

R_t in Italia



The Director General of Health Prevention of the Ministry of Health, Gianni Rezza, closed Stefano Merler's speech by highlighting how these numbers have really hit the target and have so far been essential to control the spread of the epidemic. At the end of the conference, it was announced that those who want to learn more about the indicators and their effectiveness, can visit the Higher Institute of Health website and view a focus entitled "[ISS, il sistema di valutazione del rischio, ecco come e perché funziona](#)" ("ISS, the risk assessment system, how and why it works")

PERMALINK

<https://magazine.fbk.eu/en/news/covid-19-what-can-the-rt-number-tell-us-and-why-is-it-so-important/>

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