

Omicron COVID-19 variant detected in the United States

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The first case of a person infected with the Omicron variant in the United States was identified yesterday. The fully vaccinated individual whose identity is being protected by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is a working-age adult who resides in San Francisco.

According to the CDC, the infected person returned from South Africa on November 22. Subsequently, they developed mild COVID symptoms prompting testing, which was confirmed positive on November 29. Genetic sequencing was conducted on the sample at the University of California, San Francisco, showing the infection was caused by the Omicron variant. They have remained in self-quarantine since, and all known contacts have thus far tested negative.

During the daily White House briefing on the pandemic, Dr. Anthony Fauci, White House medical adviser and director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said, “We knew it was just a matter of time before the first case of Omicron would be detected in the United States.”

The Biden administration refused to take any serious measures to contain the spread of the disease.

Speaking at the White House Wednesday, Biden pledged that there would not be any “shutdowns or lockdowns.” Even for international travel, the new measures to be employed, COVID testing for all travelers 24 hours before boarding regardless of vaccine status, will do little to slow down the spread of the coronavirus.

The Wednesday White House press conference was also notable for the near complete omission of the Delta variant's continuous deadly assault on the population. Such developments have become so commonplace they are no longer worth even serious considerations.

For instance, there was no mention that for 16 straight

weeks, more than 100,000 children have been infected with COVID. Since September 1, 2021, 1.85 million children have been infected, meaning that 27 percent of all infected children became infected in just the last three months. Seven more children died over the holiday week, bringing the cumulative total to 643 perished from COVID.

Meanwhile, the state of the pandemic in Michigan grows disastrous each day. The seven-day average of daily COVID cases climbed to a record high of 8,409. The positivity rate is nearly 20 percent. The number of COVID-positive adults hospitalized has reached a record pandemic high of 4,296. Two hundred people died yesterday from COVID. And there is no indication that the situation will ease anytime soon.

On November 29, more than 216,000 COVID cases were reported by *The New York Times* COVID tracker. The Worldometer COVID dashboard noted there were 113,000 COVID cases and 1,500 COVID deaths yesterday. In total, there have been almost 50 million COVID cases and over 800,000 reported deaths in the US.

With the confirmation of the US case, at least 24 countries across five continents have identified the new variant. In the UK, where the sequencing of coronavirus is relatively robust, 22 cases have been found. And, as of this writing, Hong Kong and Ireland confirmed Omicron cases, adding to the list of countries by the hour.

In South Africa, where 77 cases have been sequenced, new COVID-19 cases have almost doubled, climbing from 4,373 on Tuesday to 8,561 on Wednesday, per the country's health officials. Health experts have said the curve of infections is far steeper than Delta and predominately attributed to Omicron. Hospitalizations have been rising in concordance with

cases. A worrisome data point is that admissions for children under four years of age have risen dramatically.

Dr. Nicky Gumese-Moeletsi, a virologist at the World Health Organization, told *Newsweek*, “There is a possibility that really we’re going to be seeing a serious doubling or tripling of the cases as we move along or as the week unfolds. There is a possibility that we are going to see a vast increase in the number of cases being identified in South Africa.” Only 24 percent of the country’s population has been fully vaccinated.

The repeated rise of new, more virulent variants is not just a biological phenomenon. The more people are infected, the more the virus is likely to mutate. Such ripe conditions for the constant evolution of the virus are a direct byproduct of the policies set forth by the government of capitalist countries who deem the market must remain unfettered by the concerns raised by the pandemic.

Dr. Peter Jay Hotez, Dean for the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, offered his take on the current Omicron variant. He tweeted, “[It] isn’t a surprise. We’ve been saying the finding of Omicron in the US was practically inevitable given that it’s in multiple European countries.” Warning that the spread of the omicron variant does not necessarily mean that the decline of Delta variant cases, Hotez warned, “I see a possible twin epidemic or syndemic unfolding ...”



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