

COVID Vigilance: A Strict Constitutional Interpretation

TWO NEW VERSIONS OF OMICRON ARE GAINING GROUND IN THE U.S.,

The spread of the subvariants adds more uncertainty to the trajectory of the pandemic in the US. These highly transmissible variants BA.4 and BA.5 now account for the majority recent cases. But so far it has not led to huge spikes in hospitalizations or landing in ICUs and deaths.

“I think one of the things that remains somewhat undetermined with BA.4 and the BA. 5 surges are the levels of severe disease and death that we might expect. but the question is, how many hospitalizations and deaths will come as a result? And what does that mean for the health care system?” Dr. Michael Osterholm, director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota

BA.4 and BA.5 are picking up speed because they're able to evade the body's antibody response even more so than other variants, meaning they're very good at establishing infections in people who have some level of protection. “Overall, this raises concerns about more frequent BA.4/BA.5 vaccine breakthrough infections than for BA.1/BA.2, and for Omicron reinfections,” the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control reports.

'BA.5 has an R0 of 18.6 – which means it is about as transmissible as measles, which is the most transmissible virus most of us know. That means you can come into a room two hours after an infected person was there and still get infected,' according to Dr Michael Fine former RIDOH director. People who were infected by an earlier Omicron version could be susceptible to an infection from BA.4 or BA.5, scientists have found, though the combination of vaccination and an earlier Omicron infection provides more durable protection than an infection alone. But even as protection against transmission infection is diluted in the face of the newer variants, protection against serious outcomes continues to be maintained for most people who've been vaccinated or had prior infections.

What the dominant spread of these variants threatens, according to some virologists, is the transition to more aggressive and more severe variants as the pool of virus continues to infect and transmit.

Nationally, the numbers of known new cases [all variants] announced each day remain close to 100,000, though there are fluctuations where they are distributed. Another 300,000 cases are prudentially estimated that go unreported.

Around 37,000 are in hospital [4000+in ICUs] each day.

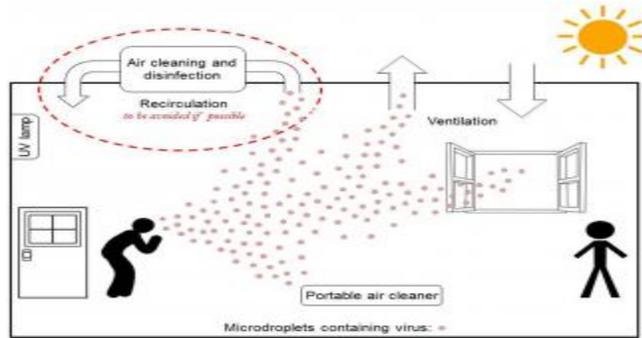
Roughly 300+ deaths are announced each day {NY Times 7/10/22}

Positive cases impact hospitals dealing with their own infected employees who must quarantine, Meanwhile, citing Covid cases among its employees:-

- Delta Airlines will reduce 100 flights through August.
- COVID-19 infections have increased 50% among Transportation Security Administration employees at the nation's airports in the weeks since the federal mask mandate was lifted on April 18th.

}=Layered measures (vaccines, boosters, treatments, effective masks, improving ventilation, testing, and social distancing) have been consistently recommended by

experts especially during the first Omicron surge. Though many of these measures have been allowed to lapse many experts feel that the rapid emergence and transmission of new Omicron variants BA.4 and BA.5 is not the time to totally relax these measures.



“With pandemic restrictions being lifted, it’s important to take a judicious approach and to realize there’s still a substantial amount of virus circulating. Even if there is a substantial degree of population immunity and if the risk of severe disease is lower, it’s not zero. People who get infected — even if they’re vaccinated and boosted — still can become quite ill.” Dr. Dan Barouch, director of the Center for Virology and Vaccine Research at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center.

Currently RI is reporting daily Covid cases fluctuating about 120 to 200. Though RIDOH’s data specialists acknowledges they only capture and therefore report less than 20% of actual cases; as such DOH’s Covid data specialists estimates that the true positive Covid number is 1250 cases a day.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has reported increasing coronavirus hospitalization rates nationwide since mid-April, and forecasts that hospitalizations may increase significantly in the coming weeks. As a result U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration is extending its Revised National Emphasis Program for COVID-19 until further notice. OSHA will prioritize inspections at workplaces with a higher potential for coronavirus exposures, such as hospitals, assisted living facilities, nursing homes, and other healthcare and emergency response providers treating patients with coronavirus. The National Emphasis Program will also continue to cover non-healthcare industries, such as meat and poultry processing.

>Current Guidance BY RIDOH **Prevent Covid-19**

‘COVID-19 is still with us, but here are tools you can use to protect yourself and your family.’ [posted 6/1/22]

- Vaccines: Stay up to date with current vaccine and boosters
- Ventilation: Outdoor or well-ventilated areas are safest.
- Masking: Wear a high-quality mask in crowded indoor setting.
- Symptoms screening especially after travel or indoor gatherings. Get tested if you are symptomatic or have been exposed someone who has tested positive.
- Isolate if test positive.
- Contact healthcare provider about treatments if you test positive.

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