

Respected Sir,

Even though the world is not recovering completely from this devastating Covid 19 pandemic, another fear of newly identified SARS-CoV-2 lineage B.1.1.529 named “Omicron” emerges. The term “Omicron” was designated on 26th November, 2021 by the World Health Organization, which is more dreadful with a whopping 32 mutations in the spike protein alone, the first case being reported to the World Health Organization from South Africa on 25th November this year.¹ Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the Director-General of WHO, has reported that about 77 countries are affected by Omicron cases, though the reality is that Omicron is probably in most countries, even if it has not been detected yet.² The first confirmed Omicron death was reported from the UK. India reported its first cases of the Omicron variant in Karnataka’s Bengaluru city, where two people, including a South African national of Indian origin and a doctor, tested positive for it, and the total tally stands at 49.³

Researchers worldwide, especially in South Africa, are conducting various studies to know more about this new variant regarding its transmissibility, severity of disease, prior infection, the effectiveness of vaccines, etc. The World Health Organization is also coordinating various countries about the researches on its signs & symptoms, the effectiveness of testing and treatment. Though it is still not clear whether it is more transmissible and more serious than other variants, we can extrapolate from what is known about the mutations of omicron to provide preliminary indications on transmissibility, severity, and immune escape to a certain extent.⁴

In most cases, symptoms are mild, mostly expressed as fever, cough, tiredness, loss of taste or smell, etc. Less common symptoms include sore throat, headache, aches, pains, diarrhea, a rash on the skin, discoloration of fingers or toes, etc. Very serious clinical features may be in the form of breathlessness, confusion, loss of speech, chest pain, etc. In any situation, prevention is the best option, and one must strictly follow the covid-19 norms & COVID-19 appropriate behavior. However, one must not be panic. If suspected, one must do the COVID Test and follow the SOPs available on its official website @who.int.

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