

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



958 Omicron: Let's Get Ahead of the News

If you've been following the news over the past few days, you may have heard about a new coronavirus variant, one that has experts holding their breath. Let's shed some early light on this, in the hope it will stave off worry, before we know if there's a reason to worry. That's next, on The Extra Point.

The omicron variant is said to have been spun off in South Africa, and has already spread to several countries. Like all the other variants, this one will make its way around the world.

Air travel from South Africa and other countries has been halted to the U.S. and elsewhere. This effort is not going to stop omicron, but perhaps it will slow it down so steps can be taken to deal with it. Vaccine makers are already working to learn what they need to know, in order to tweak their product and rush out another booster.

How long will it take for omicron to show up in Guam. That's hard to say. Delta took a while to get here.

I spent time watching the initial reports from three influential doctors and scientists, who reported what they know so far about omicron. They are Dr. Mike Hansen, Dr. John Campbell of England, and a fellow named Dr. Been who has provided medical education videos for the past 11 years, and has some 2,000 videos posted. All have prominent YouTube channels.

I'm going to do my best to give you a clear and balanced picture. First, it's too early to determine whether this variant poses a severe threat, either equal to or greater than delta has been. However, I can tell you what they're looking at and what they know so far.

In the eyes of the scientific community, there are three things to consider.

1. Is omicron more transmissible than delta?

2. Will omicron evade the protection offered by vaccines and treatments?
3. Will it make people sicker than the previous variants.

One, is it more transmissible? Early reports do show that it appears to be somewhat more contagious than delta.

Two, can omicron somehow get around the protective schemes of the vaccines and the monoclonal antibody treatments? Let me paint some word pictures that will show what experts are thinking about.

Omicron's spike protein, the part that allows it to invade cells and cause problems, is shaped a little differently than the other variants. Why is that a problem?

The antibodies produced by the vaccines and the monoclonal treatments are designed to fit the current model of spike protein. The worry is that when they see omicron's version, they won't be able to stop it because it's not the same fit.

Therefore, omicron would tiptoe its way around the antibodies, and go to work on its human host. Is this the case? They don't know yet. Doctors Hansen and Campbell suspect this may be trouble, but Dr. Been sees it another way.

Been's theory is that since the PCR test can detect omicron, it is likely not as different as some people fear, and therefore vaccines and monoclonal treatments will likely still offer a level of protection.

Number three, will it make people sicker than the other variants? Again, they don't know yet.

(Con't.)

What's the worst case scenario? It's that omicron is indeed more transmissible; does evade protection, and also causes more damage than previous variants. That would be the perfect storm, so to speak.

Before we close, Doctors Campbell and Been offered up a potential benefit from omicron.

In their view, if it is more transmissible and evades the antibodies, but is milder than delta, it could be a huge breakthrough. I'll explain.

It would infect hundreds of millions more people, and if it is mild, the vast majority would get over it easily. With that, the power of natural immunity would spread throughout the masses, and could be the turning point in the battle against COVID. You may ask, "Why is that?"

It's because natural immunity is broad spectrum antibody protection, and will offer a more effective response against all forms of COVID; while the vaccine and monoclonal treatments are designed to deal with only a narrow, specific threat.

You'll hear a lot more about omicron. I hope you seek a variety of sources for information, to always get a balanced perspective.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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