

Universal Health Organisation (UHO)

Weekly Newsletter – 22 Dec 2023



The weekly newsletters bring the updates on the science, battered and bruised during the pandemic, legal updates and impact of activism for a just society, across the world. These are small steps to promote Transparency, Empowerment and Accountability – the ethos of the UHO.

Announcement: Membership & endorsements to the UHO invited: <https://uho.org.in/member.php>

Discovery and Re-discovery of SARS-CoV-2 emerging mutants: Will New Year usher newer vaccines?

The obsession of the media, career scientists, politicians and bureaucrats with one of the [mildest infections](#) in public health history refuses to die down. Instead of moving on to our major public health problems like water & sanitation, nutrition, child malnutrition, rising obesity among the middle class, the media is abuzz with news of a new SARS-CoV-2 variant the virus responsible for Covid-19. A [centerpiece](#) in India's leading newspaper by Dr K Srinath Reddy who is one of the advisers to the government on Covid-19 is phrased to evoke mixed feelings among the population. The bold headlines read, **“Omicron’s New Look for the New Year.”** Below it the subheading reads, **“JN.1 sub-variant may lead to a rise in case counts. But with Covid-appropriate behaviours including masking, we can carry out with our lives.”** Below this is a picture of a father fully masked kneeling down to adjust the mask of his daughter.

The headline and subheading with the image of a masked parent and child is likely to create panic and mislead people to practice behaviors which have no scientific evidence. Particularly in a child soiled masks besides causing other serious infections can interfere with communication and the learning process. The UHO expresses serious concerns on the headlines and the image of this article which can mislead the public. Masks are not harmless. According to a [study](#) by AIIMS, New Delhi, dirty masks can cause fungal infections including the dreaded mucormycosis which caused havoc following the second wave taking young lives and causing [blindness](#) due to the black fungus. UHO strongly recommends that “experts” giving advisories [against evidence of benefit](#) and having potential to [cause serious harm](#) should be held accountable in case of adverse events from the unscientific interventions.

[Image in the Times of India]



The Health Ministry does its part to generate panic and chaos

It is Catch-22 all over again. The Health Ministry has issued a directive to states to ramp up [testing](#). It is well documented that since the Omicron variant became prevalent more than a year ago, the cases of Covid-19 are far milder than due to the Wuhan and Delta variants. Up to the age of 69 years the infection fatality rates [IFR](#) of Covid-19 is between 0.03 to 0.05%. And in children it is negligible.

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The milder the infection as they are due to the newer far less virulent strain the more widespread it would be. So if testing of asymptomatic is ramped up one will get more cases. Enough to create population level panic. The UHO hopes that the authorities do not get into this vicious cycle again like a cat trying to catch its tail and going round and round.

Instead UHO recommends that the Health Ministry should rather take steps to allay fear of this mild virus and it's still milder variants. A [CDC study](#) among 540667 hospitalized patients with Covid-19 found that after obesity, anxiety & fear related disorders was the most common predictor of death from the infection. The take home message is clear and simple. We are surrounded by thousands of viruses and pathogens. And we are neglecting the window of opportunity of preventing obesity in the rapidly expanding (pun intended) middle class. And to add to the problem, the authorities and the media are not losing the slightest opportunity to scale up population level panic and anxiety by subtly misleading messages. Both anxiety and perpetual panic will make the people vulnerable to infections which are the common lot of humanity since ages. Vaccines cannot give lasting immunity against the myriads of mutating viruses. This is [tunnel vision](#) . A broad spectrum protection against trivial infections (which the Covid-19 was from the very beginning), is good mental, physical and social health and all three were seriously sabotaged by panic, obesity (during lockdowns many put on weight), and isolation due to the harsh lockdowns which [fractured society](#) and broke down social and mental health.

UHO would like to take a leaf out of Sun Tzu's Art of War, which states, ***"The art of war teaches us not on the likelihood of the enemy not coming, but on our own readiness to receive him; not on the chance of his not attacking, but rather on the fact that we have made our position unassailable."***

To ensure that our population is ready to face any so called "pandemics" we should ensure that they should be healthy both mentally, physically and socially; this simple message is being overlooked deliberately by our authorities due to various conflicts of interests, political as well as commercial, as is obvious by the social marketing strategies, first to raise panic and then subtly promote vaccines as the only savior from the existential threat.

Genomic sequencing should be an academic exercise and should not guide policy

Like mathematical models, genomic sequencing should also remain an academic exercise and should not guide policy. Unfortunately career scientists, whether modelers with laptops, or virologists doing gene sequencing jump the gun for their one minute of fame announcing predictions from models or newer variants which more often mislead policy rather than offer practical solutions. And also acts as fodder for media to drive public frenzy and panic.

While [models fail](#) in infectious diseases due to faulty inputs, chasing newer variants of a virus is like chasing a [deer in the forest](#) or a cricket ball after it has crossed the [boundary line](#). Due to the milder nature of newer variants they tend to spread far and wide before they can be picked up by genomic sequencing and vaccine could be developed. As the variants spread widely it allows nature to do its job of inducing herd immunity silently much before the vaccine can catch up. Vaccination at this stage is duplicating nature's efforts which will always be one step ahead. However, if the pitch is

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prepared like the above Times of India centerpiece with extortion by “experts” to observe “covid appropriate behavior” and wear masks with supporting imagery, the market for vaccine will pick up. UHO would like the readers to take an informed decision based on the information offered in our newsletters.

Bharat Biotech to develop vaccine against all strains of the Covid-19 virus

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has [transferred](#) all strains of the Covid-19 virus to vaccine manufacturer Bharat Biotech. This was conveyed by the government to the parliamentary committee on health and family welfare in its action taken report tabled in the Rajya Sabha. The Parliamentary Committee chaired by Bhubaneswar Kalita, had recommended the ministry to promote a universal Covid-19 vaccine. UHO has concerns that if the governments as well as a government institution like the ICMR (which shares royalties on profits with Bharat Biotech from Covid vaccines) are promoting a vaccine for a mild and benign disease in collaboration with a private industry, both can have serious conflicts of interest which disqualify them to recommend policies on vaccines.

European Union Destroy 200 million doses of Covid Vaccines: India should learn from this blunder

In Europe more than 200 million doses of the Covid-19 vaccines have been dumped. This translates to a waste of Euro 4 billion! This is due to poor public health strategies and neglect of health economics. This blunder in Europe should make India pause in its vaccine promotion drive against the fast mutating coronavirus. As described above natural infection will always be one step ahead of even the latest vaccines. UHO would like to express its concern on the vaccine cocktail or “vaccine jalfarezi” being developed by Bharat Biotech by combining all strains which can drive further mutation. This is going to be a never ending race of chasing mutants and developing newer vaccines at great cost to the exchequer which a poor country like India with its other public health priorities can ill afford. Another major concern is that we do not even have a proper adverse events following immunization (AEFI) system in the country. Recently ICMR investigated [sudden deaths](#) and gave the Covid-19 vaccines a clean chit. But as ICMR is partnering with Bharat Biotech and shares royalties on profits from the vaccines, due to conflicts of interests it is not ethically qualified to monitor AEFI.

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