



Dr KK Aggarwal

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HCFI DR KK AGGARWAL RESEARCH FUND

COVID Omicron Update and Situation in Various Countries

- **South Africa Update:** The situation has improved particularly from the last week. The numbers vary from 3,000 to 3,700 cases; deaths in the last week were 130 to 133, active cases are 6,700+. The recovery rate is 95.5%. Total 22 million tests done in South Africa; 3.5 million have tested positive. The positivity rate has gone down; from 30-38 to 20 and this week it is around 7.5 to 8.2. Intensive care units (ICUs) are empty; there are 666 hospitals in the country and 6,284 patients are hospitalized; out of these, around 500 were in ICU, 243 were on ventilator. Mostly the unvaccinated persons are in ICU. There are few cases of double vaccinated persons in ICU but they were with comorbidities. Schools have reopened. Vaccination in children above 12 years is increasing, but some teachers do not want to get vaccinated. Businesses are recovering very slowly. International borders are open now.
- **Philippines Update:** New cases due to Omicron increased after the Christmas holidays. Starting January, there were 5,000 cases. Last week, the cases were highest with almost 6,000 daily new cases. But now cases have decreased; the percentage of active cases is 6.6; the total number of people affected with COVID is 3.2 million with death rate of 1.53 with total of 53,801 deaths. Sixty million have been fully vaccinated; 55 million have received the first dose. 12 to 13 million children in 5 to 11 years age group are vaccinated. Almost 50 million more people remain to be vaccinated. Booster dose has been started for healthcare workers, persons with comorbidities and senior citizens.
- **India Update:** The situation is definitely improving. There seems to be a flattening of curve, particularly in the North and North East states; though the southern states continue to have cases. Today there are 2.35 lakh cases. But many are asymptomatic or only mildly symptomatic. Test positivity rate is 10%; varies from state to state. Covaxin and Covishield, which were under emergency use authorization, have now been granted full permission by Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI). Almost 95% of eligible population has received the first dose, while 74% have received two doses. Vaccination is picking up in adolescents. The R ratio is now 1.6. Normal activities are going on in the country. Crowd management is now being given more importance. Now 50 to 100 people are allowed to attend functions. The intensity of the problem has been categorized into three groups (I, II and III) based on the number of hospital and ICU admissions. Monoclonal antibodies are the sheet anchor of treatment. Mortality rate has not increased despite increase in cases. Gradually Omicron is replacing the Delta variant. Headache is the predominant feature of Omicron; fever, upper respiratory infection (sore throat) are also reported. Vaccination has helped in reducing mortality, hospitalization and severity of infection.

- **Japan Update:** The number of infected persons has increased to 18,000 cases; but there are very few deaths. The number of people needing admission is slowly increasing. Infections among children are on the rise. Booster vaccination has made little progress. Hospitalization rate among elders who have received booster shot is low.
- **Hong Kong Update:** Omicron has caused the 5th wave; more than 100 cases daily, though not exponentially increasing. In many cases, source of infection cannot be identified. There have been no mortalities yet from Omicron. Primary schools, KG, secondary schools were closed earlier; primary and KG schools will tentatively be closed till 21st February. Primary schools may resume when at least 70% of students have received at least one dose of the BioNTech vaccine or two doses of Sinovac vaccine. More than 95% teachers are vaccinated; those who are unvaccinated have to undergo testing every 3 days. All government departments also require vaccination record. All restaurants are closed after 6 pm; gyms, parlors, church gatherings are all closed. About 79% have received the first dose, 71% have received two doses, only 15% have received the third dose. Persons older than 80 years – 28% are vaccinated; >70 years – 60% are vaccinated and 11 to 18 years – 60% are vaccinated. Vaccination for 5- to 11-year age group has started last week and is 2.2%. The government has allowed vaccination only from 5 years upwards. The pediatric formulation of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is not available; but diluted one-third of adult dose is being used in this age group.
- **Pakistan Update:** The 5th wave of Omicron is going very high; more than 8,000 people. Twenty-seven deaths in the last 24 hours. Vaccinations

are 17 crore 40 lakhs. Businesses have opened up. Standard operating procedures (SOPs) are not being followed.

- **Singapore Update:** There are 5,500 cases per day and 3 deaths yesterday. There are 3,33,000 cases so far and 850 deaths. Couple of weeks ago, 14,380 children were sick with COVID from October; of these, 4 are in ICU and 15 have multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C). Latest figures – 17,699 children infected, 2586 hospitalized, no mortalities. One lakh forty thousand children are vaccinated to date. No major side effects with 10 µg dose for 5 to 10 years age group. About 91% vaccination rate; 56% of population has received booster. Vaccination-differentiated measures have been instituted, which prevent unvaccinated persons from entering malls, restaurants, etc. Refusal to vaccination can lead to termination of job.

Participants – Member National Medical Associations:

Dr Yeh Woei Chong, Singapore, Chair-CMAAO; Dr Alvin Yee-Shing Chan, Hong Kong, Treasurer-CMAAO; Dr Marthanda Pillai, India Member-World Medical Council, Advisor-CMAAO; Dr Akhtar Hussain, South Africa; Dr Salma Kundi, Pakistan; Dr Qaiser Sajjad, Pakistan; Dr Benito Atienza, Philippines; Dr Marie Uzawa Urabe, Japan

Invitees: Dr Mulazim Hussain Bukhari, Pakistan; Dr Lawrence HB Soh; Dr Colin Goldberg; Dr S Sharma, Editor-IJCP Group

Moderator: Mr Saurabh Aggarwal

Source: Minutes of an International Weekly Meeting on COVID-19 Held by the HCFI Dr KK Aggarwal Research Fund (29th January, 2022, Saturday, 9.30 am-10.30 am)

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CDC Releases New Pneumococcal Vaccine Recommendations for Adults

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued updated pneumococcal vaccine recommendations for adults, calling for the use of two recently approved vaccines in a more streamlined manner, in order to avert the complexities of age and patient conditions. The recommendations urge use of the 15-valent pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV15) or the 20-valent PCV. The recommendations are applicable to PCV-naïve adults in the United States, either 65 years of age or older, or those who are 19 to 64 years of age with underlying medical conditions like diabetes, chronic heart or liver disease or HIV, and have not received a PCV earlier or their prior vaccination history is not known. It has also been stated that if PCV15 vaccine is used, a dose of the 23-valent pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (PPSV23) should be given, after at least 1 year... (Medscape, February 1, 2022)



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