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# Coronavirus Variant Is 50-70% More Contagious: What Does It Mean to Us?

Feb. 23, 2021 | By Wu Tong

**(Minghui.org)** After the coronavirus variant B.1.1.7 was identified in the U.K. on December 14, 2020, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on December 19 that it was 50% to 70% more contagious than the original coronavirus according to experts.

According to a January 22, 2021 Washington Post article titled “Denmark is sequencing all coronavirus samples and has an alarming view of the U.K. Variant,” the new variant also hit Denmark hard. “Cases involving the variant are increasing 70 percent a week in Denmark, despite a strict lockdown,” wrote the article.

Tyra Grove Krause from State Serum Institute in

Denmark said the the new variant poses a grave threat, as it would undermine previous progress made combating disease since the B.1.1.7 strain could dominate the country by as early as mid-February. “This period is going to be a bit like a tsunami, in the way you stand on the beach and then suddenly you can see all the water retract... Afterward, you will have the tsunami coming in and overwhelming you,” reported *Seattle Times* in an article on January 23, 2021, titled “Denmark is sequencing all coronavirus samples and has an alarming view of the U.K. variant.”

Similarly, the U.S. CDC warns the new variant could become the leading strain in the country by March. Boris Johnson announced on January 25, 2021, that the new variant is also 30% deadlier.

## **Unprecedented Event: 17 Mutations at Once**

Scientist have found B.1.1.7 has acquired 17 mutations all at once. This is something never seen before, reported *Science* magazine on December 20, 2020, citing a study from Andrew Rambaut, a

molecular evolutionary biologist at the University of Edinburgh.

Patrick Vallance, the Chief Scientific Adviser of the U.K., explained the increased death rate associated with the new strain. “If you took... a man in their 60s, the average risk is that for 1,000 people who got infected, roughly 10 would be expected to unfortunately die with the virus. With the new variant, for 1,000 people infected, roughly 13 or 14 people might be expected to die,” he said in a January interview.

Following the discovery of B.1.1.7, many countries imposed temporary travel bans with the U.K. But the variant has nonetheless spread to over 70 countries. This includes the Chinese cities of Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong. But officials failed to provide further information. For example, Xindu, Xingguang, and some communities of Daxing County in Beijing have been locked down for over two weeks, while residents did not receive a clear reason.

## **Vaccine vs. New Virus Variants**

The B.1.1.7 variant is not the only concern. Several other variants are also listed on the U.S. CDC website including B.1.351 in South Africa and P.1 in Brazil. This could potentially jeopardize the effect of vaccines.

A February 1 article on WebMD titled “‘Escape Mutations’ May Drive New COVID Resurgence” analyzed news cases in Maryland and South Carolina related to B.1.135, a strain first identified in South Africa. “None of the people who caught this version of the coronavirus had traveled, and they were not related, which shows the variant is probably already spreading from person to person in the community,” wrote the article.

Furthermore, this new version of the coronavirus has changes in the spike protein on the virus surface. Known as “escape mutation,” it allows the virus to slip past protection offered by antibodies generated through vaccination. “This mutation – E484K – has now been found in several variants of the new coronaviruses: In addition to the P.1 variant detected in Brazil, it is also in the B.1.351 variant, and within the past few days has been detected in the more contagious B.1.1.7 variant found in the U.K.,” the

article continued.

Scientists at the University of Duisburg-Essen also found virus variants with multiple mutations could escape antibody recognition and reduce the vaccine's efficacy. More specifically, all three variants mentioned above have a mutation called N501Y that affects receptor binding domain of the spike protein. This allows the virus to bind receptors more tightly.

## **Clinical Results**

Even Anthony Fauci, director of the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease (NIAID), is worried about the mutations that could escape vaccines.

Johnson and Johnson's vaccine research data showed that the vaccine only had an efficacy rate of 57%. Similarly, the efficacy of Novavax's vaccine dropped to below 50% in a small South Africa trial. More specifically, Moderna analyzed the South African variant and found its vaccine produced sixfold fewer neutralizing antibodies against that strain than it did against the original virus.

The limitations of these vaccines have been confirmed by positive cases post vaccination. U.S. Congressman Stephen Lynch from Massachusetts tested positive after he received the second dose of coronavirus vaccine produced by Pfizer. Not only that, he did not show any symptoms.

Furthermore, “there's no evidence that any of the current Covid-19 vaccines can completely stop people from being infected – and this has implications for our prospects of achieving herd immunity,” reported BBC in an article titled “Can you still transmit Covid-19 after vaccination?”

“There are two main types of immunity you can achieve with vaccines. One is so-called ‘effective’ immunity, which can prevent a pathogen from causing serious disease, but can't stop it from entering the body or making more copies of itself. The other is ‘sterilising immunity’, which can thwart infections entirely, and even prevent asymptomatic cases,” the article explained, “The latter is the aspiration of all vaccine research, but surprisingly rarely achieved.”

The situation is even more grim given emerging

variants. “Looking at our results you cannot say this would doom the vaccine. That would be wrong... But I think it is equally wrong to say everything is rosy,” said David Ho who leads the lab from the Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Center at Columbia University that found that the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines were 6.5 to 8.6 times less potent against the South African mutation.

The world has “allowed the virus to infect 100 million people already... So that is 100 million chances for mutation,” he said in a January 29 *Bloomberg* article titled “Variants Spreading in U.S. Fan the Need to ‘Crush’ Covid Quickly”.

## **Mysteries of Chinese Vaccines**

Sinovac Biotech, a leading Chinese vaccine manufacturer, only showed 50.38% efficacy in late-stage trials in Brazil. “It falls far below the 78% previously announced, raising questions as to the veracity of the data and fueling skepticism over the apparent lack of transparency regarding Chinese vaccines,” reported a January 14 CNN article with a title of “Chinese Covid-19 vaccine far less effective

than initially claimed in Brazil, sparking concerns.”

Another issue is lack of transparency. “Both Sinovac and Sinopharm have faced questions regarding the release of data. When announcing its efficacy results, state-owned Sinopharm did not provide details on its clinical trial data. A Sinopharm executive said detailed data would be released later and published in scientific journals, without giving a timeline,” continued the article.

Such problems were also seen in cases post vaccination. In mid-December, 2020, it was reported that over 300 workers at Serbia and Angola were infected although they had taken vaccines from the Chinese company Sinopharm. Due to the high risk of infection observed post vaccine, many doctors refused to receive such vaccines, said Xia, a retired physician in Chaoyang District of Beijing.

## **Science and Plagues**

For thousands of years, plagues have been a constant challenge for mankind. Examples include the Plague of Athens (430 BC), the Antonine Plague (165 – 180



AD), the Black Death (1346 – 1353), and many others.

Battling the diseases has not been easy. Edward Jenner, an English physician and scientist, created the vaccine against smallpox over 200 years ago. But the disease was not eradicated until in the 1970s. During this period of time, the world was infected with yellow fever, malaria, scrub typhus, scarlet fever, cholera, Spanish flu, AIDS, Ebola, and now coronavirus.

While celebrating the success of penicillin, streptomycin, and numerous vaccines, pathogens such as viruses also developed new routes of infection. So far, only two infectious diseases have been eradicated successfully, namely smallpox and rinderpest.

Taking one step back, we would probably realize that our confidence in defeating diseases and plagues comes from science. But if history is any indication, it has been very hard to eradicate a disease. Very often, as one disease dwindled, another one was on the horizon.

The fundamental reason is that by neglecting conscience and morality, science has led us to focus on material possession. When we indulge ourselves in earthly pleasure and allow ourselves to deviate from moral principles, we face consequences sooner or later.

## Source of Plagues

Plagues broke out many times in history and they were often attributed to various cultural reasons. Since the 1st century AD till 312, Christians were heavily targeted in the Roman Empire. Nero, for example, set up the Great Fire of Rome in 64 and blamed Christians for arson to justify his massive suppression of them. [Several plagues](#) then occurred, such as the autumn plague in 65, the Antonine Plague (165 to 180), and the Plague of Cyprian (250 to 270).

Religious persecution has also led to serious consequences in China's history. The Emperor of Wuzong in the Tang Dynasty undermined Buddhism in 845. Under his order, over 4,000 temples were demolished and about 265,000 monks or nuns met with forced secularization. In the following year, the

33-year-old emperor died and, in a unprecedented move, royal officials ignored his five sons and chose his uncle as the next emperor to restore Buddhism.

Tubo Dynasty in Tibet was also large and strong at the time. But after Langdarma became king in 838, he forced monks to hunt, turned sacred temples to slaughterhouses, and destroyed Buddha statues and discarded them in rivers. Earthquakes, landslides, and plagues soon followed, leaving the powerful Tubo Dynasty in shambles.

Unfortunately, a similar situation also happened in today's China. Deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture, Falun Gong (also known as Falun Dafa) is a meditation system based on the principles of Truthfulness-Compassion-Forbearance and has drawn about 100 million learners. But the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) started to suppress Falun Gong practitioners in July 1999, and the persecution continues unabated today. A large number of practitioners have been detained, imprisoned, and tortured. Some also became victims of psychiatric abuse and forced organ harvesting.

It may not be coincidental that the coronavirus broke

out in Wuhan. Wuhan, the earliest epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic, played a critical role in the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners. When former CCP leader Jiang Zemin decided to suppress Falun Gong in 1999, his followers instructed Wuhan television station to produce a six-hour long defamatory video to attack Falun Gong and its founder Mr. Li Hongzhi. The slanderous video not only silenced Politburo members who would otherwise have opposed the persecution, but also turned the general public against Falun Gong.

Various prophecies have also predicted the occurrence of the pandemic. French philosopher Nostradamus, for example, predicted in *Les Prophéties* that a large catastrophe in 2020 and a worsened situation in 2021. This includes rain, blood, famine, plague, and deaths. “Few young people: half-dead to give a start,” he wrote. Dato Anthony Cheng, entrepreneur in Malaysia, had predicted the 2003 SARS event. He also said the coronavirus may go through mutations and the variants would push the number of victims much higher.

Similar prophecies also existed in China. Leshan

Giant Buddha is a 71-meter (or 233-ft) statue in Sichuan Province built in the Tang Dynasty. There has been a saying that, when the water submerged the statue's feet, there would be major chaos and disasters. On August 18, 2020, the water level reached to the statue's foot, which was interpreted as a bad omen.

## **No Middle Ground in the Battle between Good and Evil**

Many people wonder why many ordinary citizens, who remain neutral on important matters, such as the persecution of Christians and Falun Gong, have also become victims of plagues.

One way of looking at it is that, similar to other totalitarian regimes such as the Nazis, the CCP was able to suppress people in numerous political movements because many people – including ordinary citizens in the general public – had remained silent or blindly followed its policy. Similarly, in the ongoing persecution against Falun Gong in China, after the CCP defamed the practice and labeled it enemy of the state, many practitioners,

along with their families, are being discriminated against in school, at work, and in society. In a sense, many people have remained silent in the persecution of Falun Gong, which allowed such persecution and discrimination to happen.

For thousands of years, civilization could continue because of traditional values and common good. But when mainstream society ignores the battle between good and evil, and remains silent in the face of human rights violations or other crimes, the general public is essentially acting as an accomplice to the perpetrators. Every one of us would be held responsible – and face consequences – in the end.

Dante Alighieri once wrote, “The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who in times of great moral crises maintain their neutrality.” When the vulnerable groups pin their hopes on the general public and they are turned down, everyone will become victims in the end.

Upholding justice and rejecting totalitarian regimes such as the CCP will lead us out of catastrophes. And every one of us is choosing our own future, as it has happened in history.

# CATEGORY: Perspective