

Precautionary measures for more transmissible C.1.2 COVID-19 variant: A caution for Qatar and the rest of the world

To the Editor,

Over the last year, we have all expanded our vocabularies as a result of living through a worldwide epidemic. Personal protective equipment, social distance, and contact tracking are all concepts we now comprehend. But just when we think we have mastered most of the vocabulary, we are now confronted with a new set of terms: mutation, variation, and strain. It is a tough time for the public because it is hard to know who to listen to and trust. The more the virus spreads, the more likely new varieties will emerge. South African geneticists have issued an alarm about a novel coronavirus strain they have been tracking since May 2021.¹ They are interested in the C.1.2 variation because it includes a number of genetic changes that are comparable to those discovered in other highly transmissible variants that can bypass vaccination protection to some extent. C.1.2 is a minor variant at the moment, although it shares many alterations with all of the major variants of concern, including Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, and Lambda. The Spike protein has been the main subject for the most of research on SARS-CoV-2 variations to date. Cleavage of these proteins increases viral transmissibility, and these alterations might improve that function even further. These alterations are responsible for increased cleavage and damage in return but the exploits of C.1.2 still remain unknown.² This type accounts for a modest percentage of cases in South Africa (~3% in July 2021), but it is steadily rising. C.1.2 may have greater immune evasion capabilities than the super prevalent delta and lambda form, according to one of the study's authors, Richard Lessells, an infectious disease specialist.³ C.1.2 is not the same as the lambda variation found in Peru, but it is on the same genetic branch.⁴ According to the research, which is currently undergoing peer review, it has spread to most provinces in South Africa, as well as a few other nations in Africa, Europe, Asia, and Oceania. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the South African National Department of Health were both notified in July that C.1.2 was spreading. C.1.2 has not yet been classified as a "variant of interest" or a "variant of concern" by the WHO but "prevention is better than cure" and appropriate measures should be considered for the curb of this variant.

Being the host of FIFA world cup 2022, Qatar is now a hub of international travel and massive economic development. Unfortunately, Qatar has had one of the highest COVID-19 infection rates in the world but owing to successful vaccination tactics implemented by the Ministry of Public Health, Qatar is currently among the top 10 countries in the world for injecting the highest number of

covid vaccine doses for its people. In Qatar, for many people, public transit will be their major means of mobility, and it might be the only option for football fans arriving in Qatar. As a result, numerous efficient counter interventions, such as management measures, disinfection, environmental hygiene, personal protection, and health promotion, must be implemented to prevent or control the disease's spread for the successful hosting of the big event. Moreover, another important aspect is to cover all the areas of transit to Qatar including air, sea, and by road travels. This can be accomplished by screening all the spectators coming to the country and by making it mandatory to have COVID-19 passports at the entry checkpoints.

CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Irfan Ullah and Abdul Jabbar conceived the idea, Soha S. Albayat, Sohaib Arshad, Muhammad A. Arshad, and Abdul Jabbar retrieved the data, wrote up the letter, and finally, Irfan Ullah and Abdul Jabbar reviewed and provided inputs. All authors approved the final version of the manuscript.


DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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