SHORT REPORT

Asymptomatic Covid-19: a major source of infection at the onset of an omicron storm

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Abstract

Even without symptoms, many people are at risk of transmitting the SARS-CoV-2 virus. This is pointed out by researchers from Beijing University based on a meta-analysis by Qiuyue Ma et al., and it was never more important since the Omicron mutation has taken over from most other variants.

Main findings

A team of Qiuyue Ma and colleagues (doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.37257) found in a systematic review and meta-analysis of 95 studies a pooled percentage of asymptomatic infections of 0.25% among a tested general population and 40.5% among a tested population with confirmed Covid-19 cases. The team from mainland China included 95
studies with almost 30,000 tested persons in their analysis. Patients who had no symptoms at the time of testing were defined as having asymptomatic infections. However, those who developed symptoms later (pre-symptomatic infections) were also counted as asymptomatic. The researchers found three groups in the tested population in which the pooled percentage of asymptomatic infections was higher than the overall average: 4.52% (95% confidence interval 4.15%-4.89%) among nursing home residents or staff, 2.02% (95% CI, 1.66%-2.38%) among aircraft passengers or cruise ship travelers, and 2.34% of pregnant women were asymptomatic (95% CI, 1.89%-2.78%).

From December 2019 to January 28, 2021, there were about 100,500,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases worldwide, including 2,166,440 deaths. The proportion of asymptomatic infections among those who tested positive was also correspondingly higher: While 40.5% were asymptomatic in the overall population (95% CI, 33.50%-47.50%), 54.11% were asymptomatic in pregnant women (95% CI, 39.16%-69.05%), 52.91% were asymptomatic in plane passengers or cruise travelers (95% CI, 36.08%-69.73%), and 47.53% were asymptomatic in nursing home residents or staff (95% CI, 36.36%-58.70%).

Significant differences also emerged when comparing continents in confirmed COVID-19 cases: The pooled percentage of asymptomatic infections was 46.32% (95% CI, 33.47%-59.16%) in North America and 44.18% (95% CI, 32.87%-55.50%) in Europe. In Asia, however, it was only 27.58% (95% CI, 13.60%-41.57%). The authors attribute this lower percentage in Asia to the large-scale SARS-CoV-2 screening program in mainland China. Higher proportions of asymptomatic infections occurred especially in industrialized countries, the reason for this finding is not entirely clear. The study design and number of participants also had an influence. The percentage was higher when the mean age of the study population was younger than 20 years (60.21% [95% CI, 24.51%-95.91%]) or 20 to 39 years (49.49% [95% CI, 33.48%-65.50%]).

However, a previous study (doi: 10.1136/thoraxjnl-2020-215042) demonstrated that upper respiratory viral load in asymptomatic patients was comparable to that in symptomatic patients. Accordingly, a potential risk of transmission also emanates from asymptomatic patients. The same is true, in various degrees, in vaccinated people. Many individuals still believe an anti-Covid vaccine would protect themselves and others. While there might be a relative and short-lived protection of other people, the Covid vaccines currently in use are not a reliable tool to protect third parties.2-7

Currently mankind is experiencing a vicious wave of the “omicron” version of Sars-CoV-2. First reports from South Africa strongly indicate a decoupling from infection and (severe) symptomatic disease.8 On the one hand this is good news, on the other hand it will accelerate the spread of Sars-CoV-2 type Omicron beyond any possibility of control. All public healthcare measure are barely more than a placebo given the contagiousness of Sars-CoV-2-Omicron.

**Conclusion**

This is the first time since the pandemic began with isolated cases in the early fall of 2019 in the city of Wuhan (CCP-China) that health authorities have completely lost control of the pandemic’s development without having any tool to counteract this evolving event. Sars-CoV-2 Omicron is unstoppable.
Conflicts of interest
none

Ethical implications
Under normal circumstances LCG Greece Research does no cooperate with Mainland China or use papers from there due to the crimes the Communist Party Regime is committing in Tibet. In this case we made an exception because the study is exceptionally important.

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