

Covid-19 update: Outbreak of worrying new IHU variant

A new variant of the Covid-19 virus has recently come to light.



Source: [Fixabay](#)

Named IHU, the new B.1.640.2 variant has so far infected 12 people living in southeastern France, five adults and seven children.

The IHU variant is named after researchers at the IHU Méditerranée Hospital based in Versailles in France.

It was initially discovered back in November and the person who was detected as having the virus had a recent travel history to Cameroon, western Africa.

There have been studies on this variant, but as it's still recently a new discovery, these studies have not yet been peer reviewed.

What we know

What we do know about the virus is:

- * The IHU strain of Covid has 46 mutations in comparison to the Omicron variant which has 37.
- * Experts caution, however, that just because a new variant had been discovered, that did not necessarily mean IHU will prove as infectious as other strains, including Omicron.

The WHO incident manager on Covid-19, Abdi Mahamud said the variant was "on their radar". He has said the number and cases of IHU could pick up, and that WHO will notify the public if the virus is deemed a concern.

Eric Feigl-Ding, epidemiologist and health economist echoed Mahamud's sentiment: "There are scores of new variants discovered all the time, but it does not necessarily mean they will be more dangerous. What makes a variant more dangerous is its ability to multiply because of the number of mutations it has in relation to the original virus."



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IHU predates Omicron

Epidemiologist, Marcel Salathé is also reported to not be concerned with the IHU variant. "Interestingly, it actually predates Omicron. It's only the media that's now picking up on it because there have been pre-prints that have been coming out in the past few days. But it was actually discovered before Omicron," Salathé said.

Stemming a tide of panic, Mahamud said WHO will monitor the IHU variant, and it will take the necessary precautions ensuing from their investigations into the severity of this particular strain.

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