



Omikron: where do we go in a sustainability context?

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At the beginning of 2022, developing and industrial countries approach a new coronavirus phase. The way for pursuing the minimization of COVID-19 has now been closed by the end of 2021 (Gautam et al., 2021). Currently, the term post-pandemic world is far from zero COVID-19 cases scenarios. The main challenge for the local and national governments and international organizations is to determine the level of COVID-19 acceptable for individual nations/states/cities in line with the world (Gautam, 2020). Science and technology have suggested and given the required tools and appropriate evidence to minimize the effects of the pandemic. However, health detriment issues are currently observed due to political responses and lack of cooperation.

2021 is marked as the year of extraordinary science for COVID-19 (Chelani & Gautam, 2021). Worldwide, approximately 26 vaccines with different efficacy were introduced. Similarly, advanced treatments are currently available to control the death rate. These new vaccines and treatments provide a sense of hope to counteract the devastating pandemic demands.

Vaccines and masks are the main weapons to fight coronavirus infections. In this regard, many vaccine roll-out programs have also been arranged with massive participation of citizens in nations such as Portugal, Chile, Cuba, and Singapore with 88%, 86%, 83%, and 83%, respectively. High participation rates also reached in some states of India (one of the most populated countries worldwide), including Uttar Pradesh (1.173 million COVID-19 vaccine doses per day), Gujarat (0.48 million COVID-19 vaccine doses per day), Karnataka (0.382 million COVID-19 vaccine doses per day), Madhya Pradesh (0.317 million COVID-19 vaccine doses per day), etc. Moreover, of all Indians who are eligible, only 40.4% are fully vaccinated, with 1390 million doses given. However, vaccination rates are lower than in Russia (48% of its population). Socioeconomic disadvantage is a considerable contributor to vaccine uncertainty in rural and remote communities.

Political ideologies often fomented compliance with public health interventions, such as indoor masking. The Indian government put the action for vaccination (booster shots) for healthcare workers/medical professionals mandatory in 2021. In spite of free vaccination for the population at large in significant proportion remains not vaccinated.

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The new shape of the pandemic is partially the report of political failures to find solutions and cooperation. Political leaders worldwide spoke about the importance of vaccination and pledged to donate doses but have consistently been unable to deliver the vaccines. The response has not matched the enormity of the situation. Political and local-driven issues undermined the health security system. Global Health Security Index (2021) showed that political stability has increased globally, and few nations are at the highest risk because of the fewest resources.

The Omikron variant will generate harm from a health and economic point of view. Medical technology will most likely provide the means to respond. Health policy and action based on individual and national leadership should provide effective and equitable results. Unfortunately, these often lacked during the past.

Environment Development and Sustainability is now open for to research contributions on Omikron and environment/sustainability relations. This new call for research results less targets the medical/virology aspects of the pandemic, but merely the social (the uneven spread of the infections over social groups), the environmental (impact of environmental pollution and meteorological parameters on the spreading caused the virus), and the economic (how to restore economies before and after the lockdowns) aspects of the discussion.

It is imperative to analyze the consequences of this sustainability analysis. The purpose of this editorial is to call for original scientific articles on the role of the environment in transmission, pathogenesis, and severity of Omikron/COVID-19 and its related mortality. Moreover, ENVI aims to review the lessons of the current and past assessment measures for the short- and long-term sustainability, particularly for the urban built environment.

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