



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



MEDIA STATEMENT

To: Editors & Health Journalists
Issued by: Department of Health
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Health Department warns the public about misleading COVID-19 Omicron Variant message

Pretoria: The Department of Health has noted a misleading message circulating through social media platforms attributed to the Ministry of Health, calling for everyone to wear a mask because of the alleged detection of a new variant of concern.

The department would like to dismiss this as fake news by faceless sources whose sole intention is to create unnecessary panic.

The fact of the matter is, the World Health Organization has issued a notification in October this year (2022) on the Omicron sublineages BQ.1 and XBB detected around the world as part of ongoing work to track variants by Technical Advisory Group on SARS-CoV-2 Virus Evolution (TAG-VE).

The role of the TAG-VE is to alert WHO if a variant that can cause a more severe disease or lead to large epidemic waves causing increased burden to the healthcare system is emerging and likely to pose a significant threat.

At the current moment, there is no epidemiological evidence that these sublineages will be of substantially greater risk compared to other Omicron sublineages.

The department, working with the NICD and other scientists, continues to monitor all COVID-19 lineages, and appeals to South Africans to continue to be vigilant as they embark on festive seasons activities.

The known COVID-19 virus variants are still in circulation, and we are not off the hook from the pandemic, hence people are urged to vaccinate and take booster shots that they qualify for to enhance their level of immunity.

For more information and media enquiries, please contact:

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