

- Virus / Variation (Biology)

WHY WAS THE VARIANT NAMEDOMICRON?

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The WHO chose to dub the variant, first reported to the agency by scientists in South Africa, ‘omicron’ — continuing its use of the Greek alphabet for naming notable variants of the virus.

The WHO has followed the Greek alphabet when labelling certain variants of the virus, SARS-CoV-2, since May. It said the system allows for variants to be referred to in a simpler way than by their scientific names, and that it helps prevent people from referring to variants by the location where they were detected.

Many had expected the agency to label the latest variant nu, which comes after mu, a variant designated on August 30. Instead, the WHO skipped over nu as well as xi, the next Greek letter in line — a move that many users on social media pointed out.