- Virus / Variation (Biology)

New virus variant sounds new alarm

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There seems to be enough reason for people to be concerned about the new Omicron variant of the novel coronavirus. Scientists have found that it contains several mutations that could help it spread more easily and lead to more severe disease. And it is not yet known how effective the vaccines are against it. Scientists are still unclear whether existing antibodies would react well to Omicron, which has 32 spike protein mutations, more than previously found variants.

Cases of the new variant have been detected in an increasing number of countries and there have been reports of one imported infection in Hong Kong.

Omicron was first identified in South Africa, from which a growing number of countries are suspending flights. Bans on traveling to or from other South African countries have also been imposed by an increasing number of countries.

The worry is that this new variant will spread even more quickly than the Delta variant and cause more serious illness in those who get infected with it, adding to the graveness of the pandemic, which has already plunged an increasing number of European countries and the United States into chaos.

But no matter whether the new variant is more transmissible and proves more deadly, it is high time that there was a truly united response to the pandemic as the fight against the virus is clearly a protracted world war.

There is no telling whether the virus will further mutate or not and there is no telling when or if a medical solution can be found that is effective against any variants that may emerge.

To strictly observe control and prevention measures so as to cut the transmission channels for the virus has so far proven the most effective way.

China's success in keeping the pandemic at bay by prompting its residents to abide by strict control and prevention measures all the time speaks volumes about this truth.

It is important for European countries and the US to bring home to their people the awareness that adoption of strict control and prevention measures is not a threat to personal freedom but a matter of life and death. Temporarily sacrificing some personal freedom is normal in wartime and is essential for the battle against the virus.

The solidarity the international community badly needs to win the fight requires all countries to impose strict control and prevention measures.

Had all countries done the same as China has, the pandemic would have been largely kept under control worldwide, which would have saved a lot more resources the world could have invested in responding to the pandemic.

But global solidarity in the fight against the virus is better late than never.