- Variation (Biology) / Virus

Omicron mortality 90 percent less than previous variants of COVID-19

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Despite the Omicron variant of COVID-19 being more infectious than previous waves, hospitalisations have been far lower, with mortality rates about 90 percent less than they were with other strains of the virus.

Dr Zaid Al Hinai, a consultant physician and assistant professor of paediatric infectious diseases at Sultan Qaboos University, also attributed the drop in serious infections to the immunity provided by vaccines and previous infections, the latter in the case of those who had tested positive for COVID-19 earlier.

Past the peak

"There are a number of good things regarding this wave: One, the infections are now coming down, so we have passed the peak," he said, during an interview with T TV. "Although the number is high, it is on a downward trend and hopefully, it will dip to lower levels of infection in about four to six weeks.

Increased level of immunity

"Secondly, it has proven to us that the immunity against the virus that we have gained from vaccinations and those who have recovered from the infection previously, is holding up very well in preventing severe infection and, therefore, we have seen much lower rates of hospitalisations, ICU admissions and deaths," he added.

"The mortality has dropped by 80 to 90 percent, compared to previous waves, and this is very strong evidence that the vaccination campaign and immunity to the community has helped a lot," he said.

Vaccinations effective

Al Hinai also explained how the vaccine helped save human lives and improved immunity, mentioning three main reasons why they were crucial in minimising the impact of the pandemic.

He said: "A lot of the credit goes to the vaccine, and there are three factors: First, the vaccination, which induced good immunity; second, the immune system has multiple layers of immunity -- it has antibodies, which even though they were designed for the original version of the virus, still cross-reacted, so we see breakthrough infection in the form of mild infections.

"Lastly, there are other forms of immunity that develop after the vaccination, like cellular immunity in which the cells seek out infected cells that contain the virus and remove it from them," he added. "The vaccine has played a very big role in the decrease of severity. Also, the best immunity has been found in people who have recovered, and also got vaccinated. They tend to have the strongest type of immunity against the virus and against severe infection.

Less harmful

"We do have a good number of that type of immunity in Oman," explained Al Hinai. "There is also that the Omicron variant itself does not cause severe disease. However, contribution towards decreased severity is only about 30 percent of the story, 70 percent of the story in terms of why this wave is much less severe has to do with the immune system and the immunity that has developed against the virus."

Oman on Monday, 14 March 2022, recorded 186 fresh infections of COVID-19. Recoveries were far higher: 434 people recovered, according to figures from the Ministry of Health. Since the start of the pandemic, 386,646 people have tested positive for the disease, while 379,563 people have recovered. Sadly, however, 4,250 people have lost the battle against COVID. Oman's recovery rate is about 98.2 percent.