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## People with the Omicron variant have 'extremely mild' symptoms and haven't had to be hospitalized yet, says the South African doctor who first reported it

Sophia Ankel Nov 29, 2021, 7:16 PM



A COVID-19 test being carried out at OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg, South Africa. Phill Magakoe/AFP via Getty Images

**A South African doctor who first flagged the Omicron variant said her patients had**

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**Dr. Angelique Coetzee said she also hasn't had to hospitalize anyone with the new variant yet.**

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**That being said, it's too early to determine the variant's risk of severe disease or possibility of evading immunity.**

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The South African doctor who first reported the Omicron variant has said that symptoms were so far "extremely mild" and that nobody has been hospitalized with it yet.

Dr. Angelique Coetzee, a private practitioner and chair of the South African Medical Association, [told the BBC's "The Andrew Marr Show"](#) on Sunday that the Omicron patients she had seen had reported feeling "extremely fatigued" with body aches and a headache.

She also said the patients did not have a cough or lose their smell or taste, which are typical symptoms of COVID-19.

"What we are seeing clinically in South Africa ... is extremely mild for us, that's mild cases," Coetzee said.

She also said she hadn't admitted anyone with the Omicron variant to the hospital yet.

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new variant. She told [The Guardian](#) last week of the mild cases: "Maybe two weeks

from now I will have a different opinion, but this is what we are seeing."

FROM NOW I WILL HAVE A DIFFERENT OPINION, BUT THIS IS WHAT WE ARE SEEING.

It is also too early to determine whether these symptoms will be the same for everyone infected with Omicron. Scientists are also still unsure whether Omicron poses a greater danger than other variants or what the variant's risk of severe disease is.

Katelyn Jetelina, an epidemiologist at UTHealth School of Public Health, [told Insider's Aria Bendix](#): "We don't know yet if this new variant is out-competing Delta. We also still don't know if it will evade our vaccines yet, either."

Omicron — known as the B.1.1.529 variant — was first identified in Botswana and South Africa, and has since been detected in Israel, the UK, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, the Czech Republic, Australia, Belgium, and Hong Kong.

Canada reported [North America's first two cases of the Omicron variant](#) on Sunday.

Cases in other parts of the world also appear to be mild.

One of the people infected with the Omicron variant in Essex, England, was feeling "well" and did not require hospitalization, the Essex director of public health, Dr. Michael Gogarty, [told Sky News on Monday](#).

Coetzee said she was the first to suspect a new variant when patients in her private practice in Pretoria started reporting COVID-19 symptoms that were different from the dominant Delta variant earlier in November.

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