

Omicron Variant: What We Know (*Interview Transcripts*)

Bill Walsh, M.D., Chief Medical Officer, OSF HealthCare Little Company of Mary Medical Center

“We know that it has some origins in South Africa. We know that it is genetically different and that it is what they call a variant of concern. But we don’t know a whole lot else. We don’t know how virulent it is, which means how severe the infection is. We don’t know how transmissible it is, which is how likely it is to spread.” (:27)

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“The precautions we are currently taking, such as wearing a mask, washing your hands frequently, watching your distance, and getting vaccinated, will be the same precautions for the omicron variant as they are for the delta variant as they were for the original SARS-CoV-2.” (:16)

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“We expected COVID to mutate. We have seen a few major mutations – most notably, recently the delta variant. It’s quite clear that the vaccines we have in this country work well on even the delta variant. It may not prevent spread, but it helps prevent severe disease and hospitalization. About 90 percent or more of the hospitalized patients with COVID are unvaccinated. So it stands to reason that the best protection you can do against the omicron variant would be to get yourself vaccinated.” (:36)

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“The COVID vaccine is like a seatbelt. If you have it, it protects you when you need it. You don’t drive your car without a seatbelt, so why live your life without a COVID vaccination?” (:14)