

Employer Town Hall

Implications of the Omicron Variant: What's Next for Employers?

February 17, 2022
12:00 PM ET

Moderators & Participating Panel



Scott Conard, MD
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Chief Medical Officer
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Regional Medical Director
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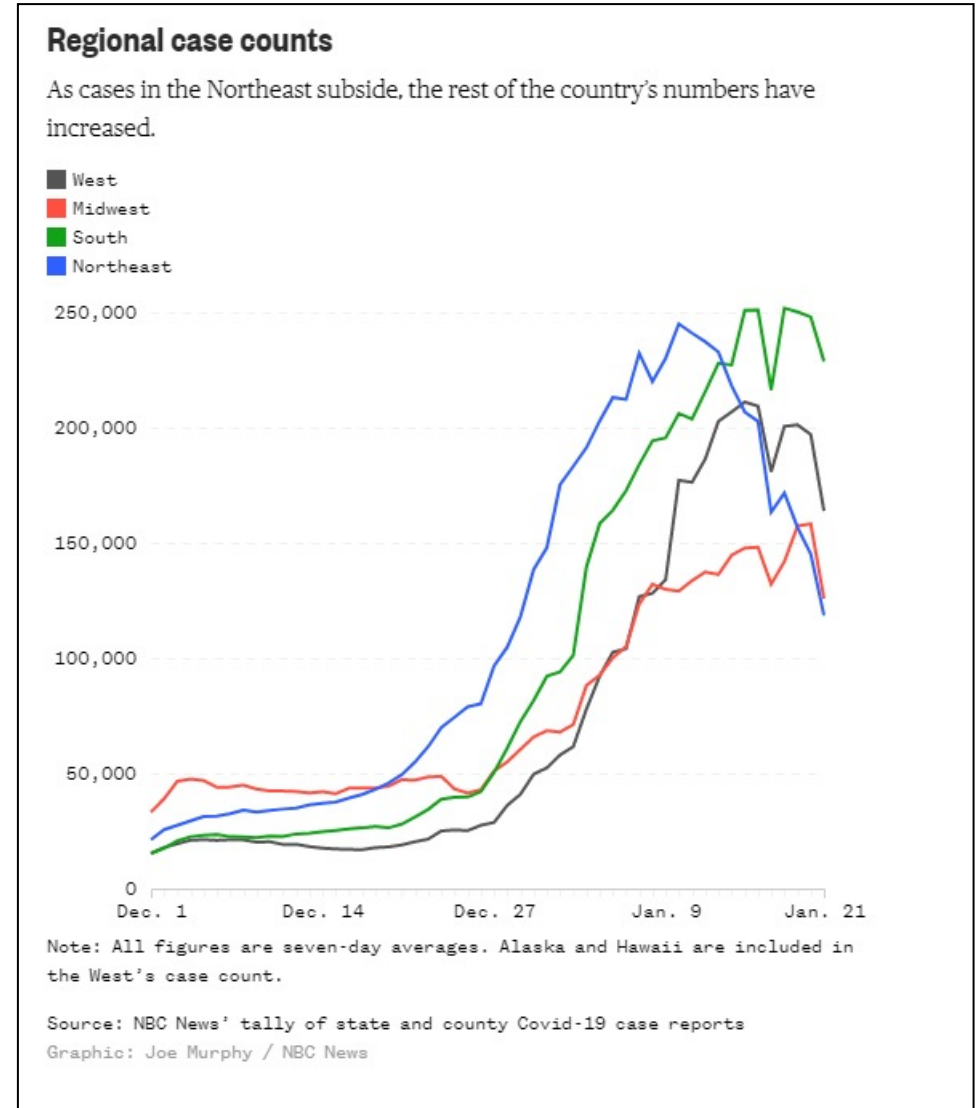
Wayne Rawlins, MD
VP & Chief Medical Officer
WellSpark



Karen van Caulil, PhD
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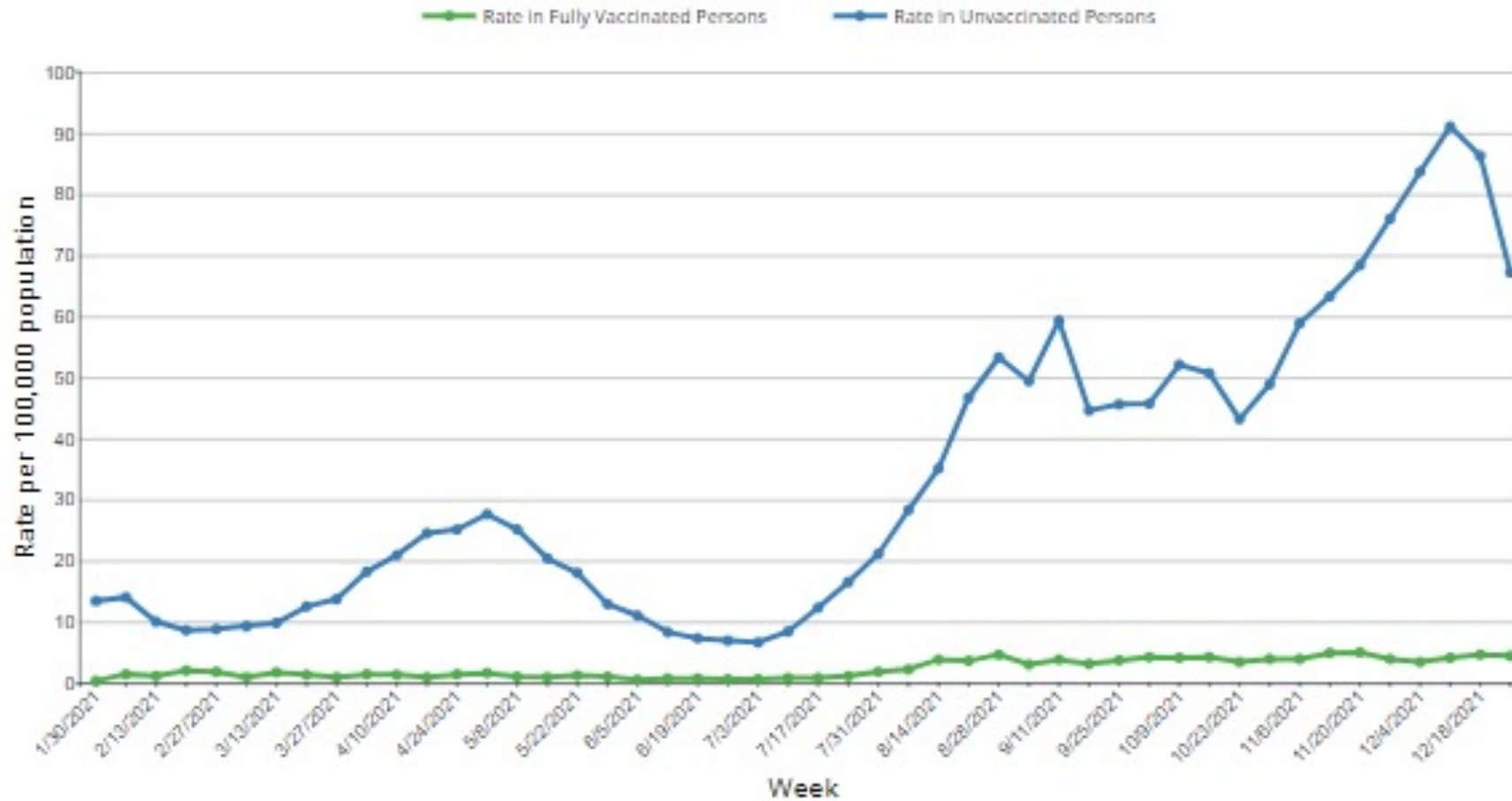
Implications of Omicron Variant

- Dominates 98.3% of cases nationwide (CDC)
- Looks milder than the other versions
 - Fewer hospitalizations and deaths
 - Milder hospitalization
 - Less breathing problems
- Unvaccinated adults
 - Three times higher risk of infection
 - Five times higher risk than adults who had received a booster
 - 9 – 17 times more likely to have COVID-19 associated hospitalizations



Two COVID Americas

Age-Adjusted Rates of COVID-19-Associated Hospitalizations by Vaccination Status in Adults Ages ≥ 18 Years, January–December 2021



Update on Natural Immunity

- Before the delta variant - Vaccination was more protective against new infection than natural immunity
- Since the delta variant – Natural Immunity has been shown to be as protective against new infection as vaccination alone
- Vaccination and related boosters are still recommended regardless of whether one has been previously infected with COVID-19

*“Although the epidemiology of COVID-19 might change as new variants emerge, **vaccination remains the safest strategy for averting future SARS-CoV-2 infections, hospitalizations, long-term sequelae, and death.***

Primary vaccination, additional doses, and booster doses are recommended for all eligible persons. Additional future recommendations for vaccine doses might be warranted as the virus and immunity levels change”

Morbidity & Mortality Weekly Report 1/28/2022

Are there implications for employer COVID-19 policies?

Navigating Evolving COVID-19 Policy

5 Day Rule

Current CDC Guidance

- Impact of Omicron
- Vaccinated vs. unvaccinated
- Quarantine/isolation period
- Masking and other safety concerns
- Educating on “up to date”

People with COVID-19 should:

- Isolate for 5 days and if they are asymptomatic or their symptoms are resolving (without fever for 24 hours)
- Follow that by 5 days of wearing a mask when around others to minimize the risk of infecting people they encounter

Individuals who are “up to date” (primary series and may include booster):

- Do not need to quarantine following an exposure
- But should wear a mask for 10 days after the exposure

Integrating Home Testing Into Current Employee Health Strategies

- Different types of testing available
- Relative effectiveness
- Impact on workplace policy
- Relationship to PCR testing requirements
- Testing costs and benefits

False Positives
vs.
False Negatives

Reviewing the Impact of Emerging COVID-19 Treatment

Types of current treatments

- Monoclonal antibodies
- Antivirals - Remdesivir
- Orals – Paxlovid & Molnupiravir

Key Issues

- When are treatments recommended
- Benefits and costs of treatment for different populations
- Impact on workplace policy

Preparing for the Implication of Long COVID as a Chronic Disease

- Classified as symptoms that last from four weeks to six months
- 10% infected with COVID-19 will experience long haul symptoms
- Breathing issues, heart problems, neurologic (brain fog, fatigue, headache, dizziness), mental health issues, diabetes, kidney damage

Potential Considerations

- Evolving knowledge and science
- Employee education
- Coverage and benefits policy
- Workplace accommodation

Ongoing Mental Health & Caregiver Challenges

- Omicron created a resurgence in mental health concerns
- Ongoing instability of school and dependent care environments
- COVID exposure requires pivoting caregiving requirements
- Longer term socialization and mental health concerns for both employees and their families

Potential Considerations

- Employee engagement
- Coverage and benefits policy
- Workplace accommodation
- Remote vs. onsite workers

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Upcoming Event

SAVE THE DATE! 2022 Leadership Summits

June 27-28, 2022, Detroit, MI

