



Omicron Variant, Booster Dose and Vaccine for Kids: A Month of Anxiety with Multiple Issues

01 November–30 November, 2021

The month of November, 2021 has been woven around with multiple issues of concern mainly the emergence of new Covid 19 variant by the name **Omicron** and efficacy of Indian vaccines against it; probability of starting **Booster Dose** and future of **Vaccination for Kids**.

The news of its latest and reportedly more virulent variant Omicron has hit the World. While there is no case of the new variant in India till the last day of November and the authorities are taking all required measures to ensure that it doesn't breach our borders but there is widespread anxiety. With the latest news of Moderna CEO sharing that vaccines are less effective against Omicron, people are naturally in panic mode. Based on scientific evidence that has come to light so far, Dr Samiran Panda, Head, Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases Division, (ICMR), recently suggested the possibility that available COVID vaccines may not prove as effective against the new variant as it should be.

On a related issue, Prime Minister Modi highlighted the need to monitor international arrivals and travellers must be tested as per guidelines, with a specific focus on countries identified at risk. PM was briefed about B.1.1.529 or Omicron, along with its characteristics, impact in various countries and implication for India

In such a scenario, it only makes sense for people to wonder if it's time for a **Booster Dose**, specifically for those, who were vaccinated in the first leg of vaccine roll out. India is said to release a policy document on administering a booster dose.

Regarding **Vaccination to Kids**, they may have to wait for some more time to get vaccinated against Covid-19 as the Government will start immunization for kids only after Bharat Biotech's Covaxin is approved for use, which might take a few more weeks.

In this background, this fourth edition of CUTS Occasional News Wrap (ONW) captures various opinions expressed on this matter by way of selective write ups, op-eds, articles and news etc. in the month of November, 2021, specifically Omicron, booster dose and jabs to kids.

Article/Op-ed		Key Takeaway
1	<p>How a billion jabs could impact the Indian economy</p> <p><i>Mint</i> By Jagadish Shettigar & Pooja Misra November 1, 2021</p>	<p>With India having met the timelines that it had set for administering over one billion Covid-19 vaccines, it is important to explore its potential impact on the country's economic prospects. Mint explains the impact on consumption and the supply-chain.</p>
2	<p>The laggard states are catching up on vaccination</p> <p><i>Mint</i> By Rashmi Kundu November 4, 2021</p>	<p>As India began rolling out the Covid-19 vaccine earlier this year, some states such as Telangana, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu struggled to keep pace with the rest of the country. However, in the last two festive months, these three states, along with Maharashtra and Assam, have picked up speed, doing better than high-performing states and even the national average, data shows.</p>
3	<p>UK to recognise Covaxin, no quarantine required for fully vaccinated travelers</p> <p><i>ND TV</i> November 8, 2021</p>	<p>The United Kingdom (UK) on November 8, 2021, said it would recognise all COVID-19 vaccines on the World Health Organization (WHO)'s approved list, meaning that it will now extend recognition to China's Sinovac, Sinopharm and India's Covaxin as well.</p>
4	<p>International organizations, vaccine manufacturers take stock of COVID-19 vaccine roll out, share views for 2022</p> <p><i>WTO</i> November 9, 2021</p>	<p>The 2nd High-Level Consultations with the CEOs of leading COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing companies by the heads of the International Monetary Fund, World Bank Group, World Health Organization and WTO. All attendees agreed that more vaccine doses must be delivered to low-income countries, where less than 2.5 percent of the population has been fully vaccinated.</p>
5	<p>Govt. to start vaccination for kids only after nod to Covaxin</p> <p><i>The Times of India</i> By Sushmi Dey November 9, 2021</p>	<p>Children may have to wait for some more time to get vaccinated against Covid-19 as the Government will start immunization for kids only after Bharat Biotech's Covaxin is approved for use, which might take a few more weeks.</p>
6	<p>India likely to miss out on its share of jabs through Covax</p> <p><i>Mint</i> By Neetu Chandra Sharma November 9, 2021</p>	<p>According to WHO, countries that have vaccinated more than 40% of the population should not be given more vaccines. India, a major producer of Covid vaccines, was eligible to receive nearly 98 million doses of such vaccines through Covax.</p>

7	<p>AstraZeneca commits to vaccines with new division</p> <p><i>Financial Times</i> <i>By Donato Paolo Mancini and Hannah Kuchler in London</i> November 09, 2021</p>	<p>Initially, AstraZeneca was not seen as an obvious partner for the University of Oxford because it made just one vaccine, a nasal spray to prevent flu, and so did not have the infrastructure required for traditional vaccine production.</p>
8	<p>96 nations agree to mutually recognise vax certificates with India</p> <p><i>Times of India</i> November 10, 2021</p>	<p>96 countries have agreed to mutual recognition of Covid-19 vaccination certificates with India. The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the ministry of external affairs, is in constant contact with all countries to ensure mutual recognition of vaccine certificates and also WHO and nationally approved vaccines in order to facilitate hassle-free international travel.</p>
9	<p>India could resume shipping jabs to COVAX in a few weeks</p> <p><i>By Krishna N. Das</i> November 10, 2021</p>	<p>India could resume deliveries of COVID-19 shots to global vaccine-sharing platform COVAX in a few weeks for the first time since April, two health industry sources said, ending a suspension of supplies that has hurt poor countries.</p>
10	<p>Policy on booster shot soon: Panel member</p> <p><i>By Bappa Majumdar</i> November 12, 2021</p>	<p>India will soon release a policy document on administering a booster dose (third dose) of Covid-19 vaccine, a key member of the country's Covid task force said.</p>
11	<p>Local partners shift focus to producing Sputnik Light vax</p> <p><i>Mint</i> <i>By Divya Rajagopal</i> November 15, 2021</p>	<p>Indian manufacturers of the Russia-developed Sputnik V vaccine will shift focus on producing the single-shot Sputnik Light due to the complex process involved in rolling out the two-dose Covid-19 vaccine.</p>
12	<p>Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna jabs show better immunity</p> <p><i>Mint</i> <i>By Neetu Chandra Sharma</i> November 18, 2021</p>	<p>Immune system cells, or helper T cells, persist even after six months in people, who received either the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines and help protect against the delta variant of SARS-CoV-2, according to a study by researchers at Johns Hopkins Medicine, US.</p>
13	<p>Which vaccine is most effective against Delta?</p> <p><i>The Economist</i> November 20, 2021</p>	<p>Which vaccine is the most effective against the Delta variant? The Economist has collected the largest set of vaccine results against the variant and found that vaccines continue to provide significant protection. The two mRNA vaccines, from Moderna and Pfizer-BioNtech, performed best, followed by the Astra Zeneca jab.</p>

14	<p>Covaxin effectiveness only 50% against symptomatic Covid-19</p> <p><i>Science The Wire</i> November 24, 2021</p>	<p>Results of an interim study recently published in <i>The Lancet</i> showed that two doses of Covaxin, also known as BBV152, had 77.8% efficacy against symptomatic disease and presented no serious safety concerns.</p>
15	<p>EU regulator gives go-ahead to first Covid shot for 5-11 year olds</p> <p><i>Reuters</i> By Pushkala Aripaka November 25, 2021</p>	<p>The EU's drug regulator approved the use of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine for children between the ages of five and, paving the way for them to be given a first shot as Europe struggles with a surge in cases.</p>
16	<p>Russia, India and China (RIC) must recognise vax certificates issued by each other</p> <p><i>The Economic Times</i> By Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury November 27, 2021</p>	<p>Minister of External Affairs Jaishankar underlined the importance of a timely, transparent, effective and non-discriminatory international response to global health challenges including pandemics, with equitable and affordable access to medicines, vaccines and critical health supplies. Minister was speaking during 18th RIC meeting of foreign ministers.</p>
17	<p>European Union's vaccine certificate plans a new hurdle for India</p> <p><i>The Economic Times</i> By Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury November 29, 2021</p>	<p>India may face a new challenge following the European Union's (EU) proposal to recognise vaccine certificates for nine months after an individual's vaccination series and its suggestion of booster doses within the nine-month period for safe travel. The government, after tough negotiations with various partners around the globe, had secured mutual recognition for vaccines certificates.</p>