

## COVID-19 Update October 2021

Mutants, Medication, Misinformation & Masks  
by Ann Gerhardt, MD

Scientific concern about the new lambda and mu variants has waned and the **Delta variant remains dominant**. Even when vaccinated, avoidance is the best approach. We have to remain vigilant about masking and social-distancing because continued infections in unmasked, unvaccinated people may spawn potentially more virulent virus mutants.

Unvaccinated people comprise about 90% of all COVID-19 admissions. Only 0.0001% of fully vaccinated people have died, likely because some elderly or otherwise immunocompromised people were unable to mount a strong response to the vaccine. An imperfect immune response to the first vaccine round is the reason vaccinated people can be infected. It's also a good reason to get a booster. The FDA is in the process of approving boosters for all three vaccines in the U.S.

**Treatment options are expanding.** Extra-Corporeal Membrane Oxygenation (ECMO), with which doctors detour blood to a machine where it is oxygenated and then returned to the circulation, has helped to improve outcomes of severe COVID-19 lung disease.

REGEN-COV is a monoclonal antibody against SARS-CoV2 virus which is administered by infusion into a vein. It helps to prevent infection in non-fully-vaccinated, high-risk people after definite exposure to active COVID-19 infection. It also can be used in people with mild to moderate COVID-19 infection if they have high risk of severe disease.

Molnupiravir, the newest COVID-19 medication, doesn't kill SARS-CoV2 virus. It causes mutations in its RNA genes, preventing virus reproduction. When started soon after symptom onset in Phase III trials, it reduced hospitalization and death by 50%.

It's still waiting for emergency use authorization by the Food and Drug Administration.

There is still no supportive data for using ivermectin to treat COVID-19. Ivermectin treats parasitic worm diseases. Taking the high dose ivermectin products intended for horses leads to toxicity in humans and would be stupid to do. We have much better, safe treatment available.

Misinformation & conspiracy theories are hilarious and sad that people believe them. Viruses on their own do a great job of causing epidemics without anyone having to create one in a lab. Vaccines don't make people magnetic, don't implant microchips in us and don't mutate our genes. Masks don't equal freedom – and if you can't stand the smell, see a dentist. As science evolves over time, recommendations change, but that doesn't mean we should ignore them – At least they are based on something other than fear and imagination.¶