The Truth about the Origin of Omicron

Ali Dawood[1]

1 University of Mosul

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Abstract

To date, the origin of the Omicron variant is unknown due to it features a huge number of mutations that are uncommon in other human variants. The most accepted idea is that Omicron arose through a long-term infection of a person with a weakened immune system. According to a study conducted in China, it is conceivable that Omicron was derived from mice. This theory came according to the analysis of viral RNA mutations, whose origins were linked to all types of the Coronavirus family of animal origin. The virus was transmitted from animals to humans, which provoked the current controversy about the emergence of this variant. If Omicron was produced from mice, the consequences of it spreading across non-human hosts will provide additional hurdles in the epidemic's prevention and containment.

Keywords: Omicron, SARS-CoV-2, Mouse, furin, origin.

Introduction

The Omicron variant B.1.1.529 of SARS-CoV-2 was categorized as a variant of concern (VOC) by the World Health Organization (WHO) in November 2020, making it the fifth VOC since the epidemic began. Since its discovery, the Omicron variety has swiftly spread over the world, becoming the most frequent form in many places. Despite its high rate of transmission, the variety appears to induce less severe sickness than other viral strains, such as the Delta variant. While being stronger at evading immune protection offered by COVID vaccines and earlier SARS-CoV-2 infections, studies have found that the Omicron variantproduces less severe illness than the Delta variant, despite being highly transmissible. Omicron's beginnings, on the other hand, remain a mystery.

Omicron originated from mouse

Scientists from all around the globe have been working hard to figure out where the Omicron variety came from, and while they know it came from a strain that was circulating in mid-2020, they haven't found any intermediate forms as Omicron evolved into its current form. According to common belief, Omicron infected an animal and caused mutations as it moved through the animal community, eventually transferring to humans. Mice have a long history of being disease carriers. Researchers have now discovered data that supports the animal idea, indicating that Omicron's most likely initial host was

a mouse.

Mice may have transformed into Omicron variants. Researchers from China have presented additional evidence for the Omicron variant's likely mouse origin in a study. Scientists have to consider the origins of mutations due to their fast accumulation. Reverse zoonotic transmission, according to the researchers, might have infected a mouse with a human virus. All or most of the new mutations in the corona virus may have originated in a mouse before being introduced to humans. What scientists have found in the pike protein has inspired this host-jumping idea. The Omicron spike protein sequence, in fact, was subjected to more positive selection than any other SARS-CoV-2 variation known to emerge in humans.

They discovered that Omicron's molecular mutational spectrum differed greatly from that of all other viruses that evolved in human patients, but that it was very similar to that of viral development in mice cells. While other researchers have lately speculated that Omicron may have evolved after a brief stay in an intermediate host such as a rat or perhaps a deer, this is the first study to put flesh on the bones of this zoonotic two-step. The scientists speculate that the mutations, as well as insertions and deletions, detected in mice over the course of a year may be explained by evolution. Calculating mutational lag periods, on the other hand, is notoriously difficult and often subjective.

Omicron and furin cleavage

However, new study reveals that creating a furin cleavage site from scratch may not be as difficult as originally imagined. Omicron is also immune to vaccines and antibodies, but not T-cell responses. The same types of indicative molecular mutation spectrums observed in Omicron may be clearly visible following passage in particular cell lines. To put it another way, viral characteristics may be easily developed under precise culture conditions based on the demands and preferences of the cell lines employed.

A flurry of new research suggests that creating a furin cleavage site from scratch may not be as difficult as previously thought. A European bat with a coronavirus that is just one mutation away from having a polybasic furin cleavage site at the S1/S2 spike position was discovered at that time. Omicron is also immune to vaccines and antibodies, but not T-cell responses. Omicron, on the other hand, does not appear to have syncytia formed by rampant cell fusion, which could explain why it is less severe.

Facts about Omicron

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Researchers discovered 45 mutations in Omicron since it split from the B.1.1 lineage, according to the report. In a mouse cellular context, the molecular spectrum of mutations looked a lot like the spectrum of viral evolution. SARS-CoV-2 mutations that facilitate adaptation to mice hosts were shown to have a lot of overlap with Omicron spike protein mutations. When Omicron is placed in a phylogenetic tree, this idea seeks to explain why it seems so strange. Other scholars, on the other hand, feel that this notion isn't entirely accurate. The SARS-CoV-2 spike protein does not readily bind to the mice equivalent of the human ACE2 receptor. To acquire access into human cells, the virus normally binds to the human ACE2 receptor. The Omicron variant is mostly to blame for the worldwide increase in COVID-19 cases since. The evidence given in this study contradicts scientific theories that suggest Omicron developed in highly immunocompromised people.

Omicron infects mice in the lab

Other researchers have adapted SARS-CoV-2 to infect mice in the lab, raising the question of whether lab animals are involved in the virus's origins, given that it hasn't been recorded in the real world. This makes it difficult, if not impossible, to figure out how the virus got from humans to mice.

The animal origin account of Omicron has been met with skepticism by scientists in general, however most agree it is too early to learn about the variant's origins. The general assumption is that it appeared in an immunocompromised patient or in a location with inadequate COVID-19 surveillance. Nonetheless, it's a crucial question to help forecast and avoid harmful variations from arising in the future.

The virus has evolved to infect mouse cells, as seen by its mutation profile. Furthermore, the time-scaled phylogenetic tree suggests that the Omicron and Gamma lineages were most likely circulating in mid-2020, supporting the idea that Omicron developed in a non-human animal species. We think the coronavirus mutated slowly in mice before being transferred back to humans via reverse zoonotic transmission. Based on these findings, researchers should concentrate their efforts on SARS-CoV-2 variants isolated from wild animals, particularly rodents. If Omicron was produced from mice, the consequences of it circulating in non-human hosts would provide new hurdles in pandemic prevention and management.

Conclusions

Researchers should concentrate on SARS-CoV-2 variants isolated from wild animals, particularly rodents, based on the findings. If Omicron was produced from mice, the consequences of it spreading across non-human hosts will provide additional hurdles in the epidemic's prevention and containment. Many scientists have questioned Omicron's animal origin tale, while they usually feel it is too early to completely comprehend the variant's origins. Nonetheless, it's an essential topic since it might help us detect and prevent hazardous variations from emerging in the future.

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