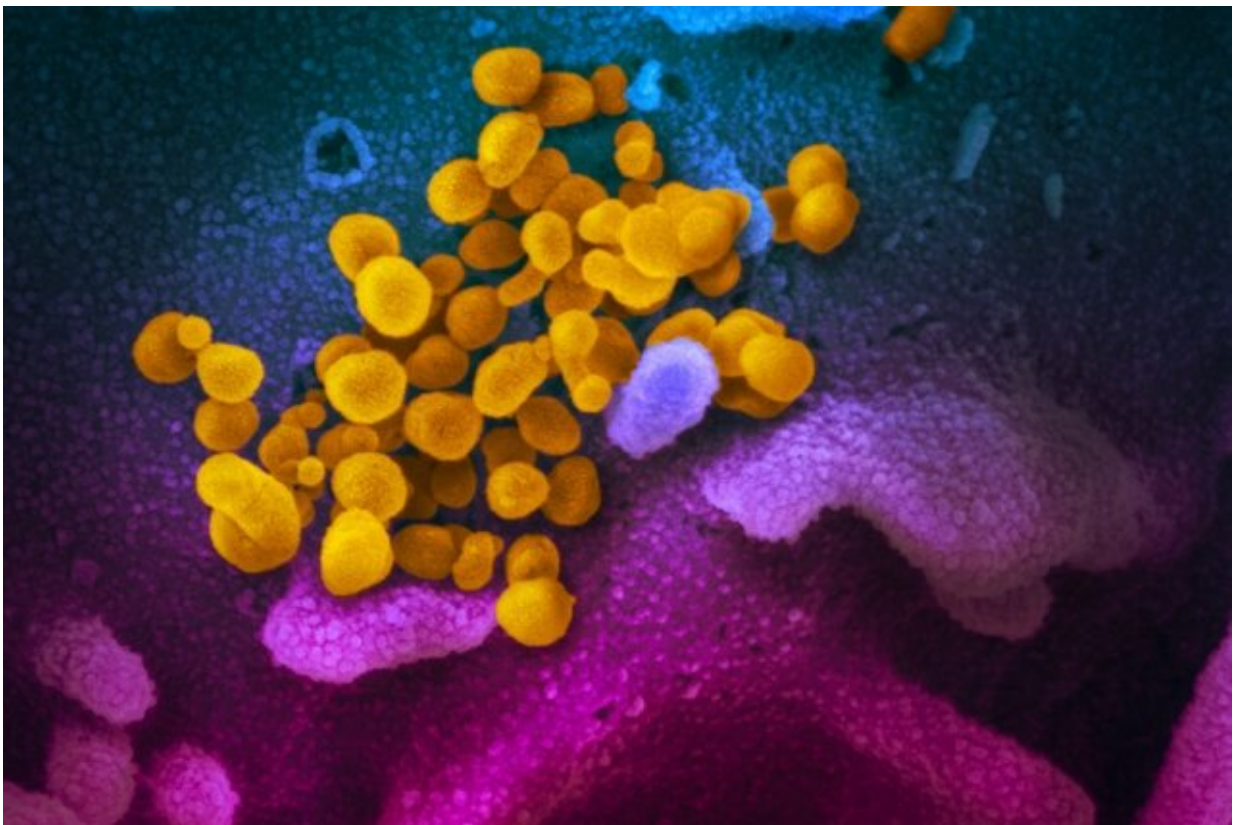


Germany confirms two cases of new Covid strain: regional ministry

November 27 2021



This scanning electron microscope image shows SARS-CoV-2 (yellow)—also known as 2019-nCoV, the virus that causes COVID-19—isolated from a patient, emerging from the surface of cells (blue/pink) cultured in the lab. Credit: NIAID-RML

Germany on Saturday confirmed its first two cases of the new Omicron

strain of COVID-19, in travellers who arrived at Munich airport from South Africa, regional officials said.

"Two suspected cases of the new virus variant Omicron classified by the World Health Organization as a variant of concern have been confirmed in Bavaria," the health ministry of the southern state said in a statement.

The people, who arrived back in Germany on Wednesday, have been isolating at home since receiving positive PCR test results for coronavirus, the ministry added.

A ministry spokeswoman said that, after reading news reports about the new strain, the people "proactively sought an examination for the variant".

She said that in addition, two foreign passengers who arrived in Bavaria on a flight from Cape Town on Friday had tested positive for coronavirus and authorities were now investigating whether they were also infected with the new strain.

The report from Bavaria came after health officials in the western German state of Hesse identified the country's first suspected case of the new COVID-19 variant, in a person who also returned from South Africa.

The person, who was fully vaccinated against coronavirus, developed symptoms "in the course of the week" and was then tested.

Final results of gene sequencing are expected "in the coming days".

German Finance Minister Olaf Scholz, who is expected to be sworn in as successor to Chancellor Angela Merkel early next month, stressed Saturday that his coalition would do "everything necessary" to fight

"corona and Omicron".

"There is nothing which can't be considered," he tweeted, as calls grew louder for mandatory coronavirus vaccinations and new shutdown measures.

Belgium said on Friday it had detected the first announced case in Europe of the new COVID-19 variant, in an unvaccinated person returning from abroad.

Meanwhile Britain on Saturday confirmed its first two cases of the new Omicron strain, which the World Health Organization has declared to be a variant of concern.

EU officials agreed on Friday to urge all 27 nations in the bloc to restrict travel from several southern African nations, a policy Germany has already announced.

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Citation: Germany confirms two cases of new Covid strain: regional ministry (2021, November 27) retrieved 5 February 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-11-germany-covid-variant-case-regional.html>

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