Employer Town Hall

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

February 17, 2022
12:00 PM ET
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

Source: https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/omicron-wave-covid-cases-finally-peaked-us-rcna13103
Two COVID Americas

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

Source: https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#covidnet-hospitalizations-vaccination
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?

Sources: [https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7104e1.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7104e1.htm)
Navigating Evolving COVID-19 Policy

5 Day Rule

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

Current CDC Guidance

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
Moderators & Participating Panel

Scott Conard, MD
Chief Medical Advisor
National Alliance

Christa-Marie Singleton, MD
Chief Medical Officer
Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

Mohannad Kusti, MD
Regional Medical Director
Pivot

Ginger Miller
Director, Health & Benefits
Utz Quality Foods

Sarah Moyer, MD
Director
Louisville Metro Health and Wellness

Wayne Rawlins, MD
VP & Chief Medical Officer
WellSpark

Karen van Caulil, PhD
President & CEO
Florida Alliance for Healthcare Value
Upcoming Event

SAVE THE DATE! 2022 Leadership Summits
June 27-28, 2022, Detroit, MI