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## **Covid-19. Ciccozzi (Campus Bio-Medico University): "XE recombinant virus not a cause for concern"**

The detection of a new strain of SARS-Cov2 is no reason to be alarmed. A recombinant variant, subsequently named XE by the World Health Organization, has been detected in the UK. Professor **Massimo Ciccozzi**, Head of Medical Statistics and Molecular Epidemiology at the Campus Bio-Medico University in Rome, told SIR that its transmission rate is yet to be determined, given the absence of scientific evidence. Its emergence should therefore not be a cause for concern because, the professor points out, "it is normal for viruses to change." **Professor, is it accurate to refer to XE as a new variant?** No. A variant is the mutation of a virus, whereas XE is a recombinant form of the virus. When a virus multiplies, it undergoes one or more mutations which make it different from the original strain. A recombinant involves two viruses that belong to the same strain. In other words, when two variants of the same virus merge into a hybrid, it is known as recombination. **Is it true that XE is more contagious?** We don't have enough scientific data to answer this question now. Once we have the data we will know. Our research group at Campus Bio-Medico studied the membrane potentials of Omicron 1 and 2 in the Journal infection paper and we saw that transmissibility remained unchanged. It is most likely that XE has the same degree of transmissibility. It is a normal way for viruses to evolve: they are very contagious and are not deadly. **It has been said that a booster dose of the vaccine remains effective**

**Effectiveness can be assumed because, as mentioned, it is a hybrid of form 1 and form 2 for which we have data.**

**Is it present in Italy?** We don't know yet because we haven't done enough sequencing, whereas in England, where it has been detected, there is a dedicated consortium. **Are the symptoms the same as the Omicron variant?** Based on preliminary data, it seems that symptoms are comparable to those of the common cold and no new symptoms have been reported. **Do you think we should be worried about the circulation of XE?**

**No. What we are seeing is the normal evolution of the virus.**

**Is the daily number of COVID-19 deaths in Italy worrying?** It is. However, since we don't do sequencing of the victims' coronavirus test swabs, we don't know which variant infected them. For example, we don't know whether they were infected with the Delta variant. **On the subject of the new regulations, indoor mask use will no longer be required as of May. What do you think about this decision?** Given the daily infection rates, I would not recommend it. The virus has two purposes: to infect and to endlessly multiply. It will therefore continue to do so. It will become a human Coronavirus and we will no longer be worried about it. **Will a fourth dose be needed next fall?** Yes, for the fragile and those over 65 years of age who could experience complications even with mild flu-like symptoms.

Maria Elisabetta Gramolini