

Omicron detected in Europe before South Africa reported variant



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Geneva, December 1 (RHC)-- The Omicron coronavirus variant has been identified in at least 20 countries as more governments move to impose travel bans and other restrictions to curb its spread.

This comes as new evidence shows the highly mutated variant was present in the Netherlands at least several days before it was first detected and reported to the world by South Africa. Two flights on Dutch airline KLM may have been superspreader events for the Omicron variant.

In other coronavirus news, an FDA panel voted by a narrow margin to endorse the use of Merck's antiviral COVID-19 pill. The oral treatment, which was shown in trials to reduce severe illness and death, could be approved for patient use within days and available within weeks.

In legal news, a federal judge has blocked the Biden administration's vaccine mandate for health workers. The requirement was scheduled to take effect next week.

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