

U.S. COVID death toll surpasses 900,000



New York, February 5 (RHC)-- Propelled by the highly contagious Omicron coronavirus variant, the U.S. COVID-19 death toll hit 900,000, according to data from Johns Hopkins University, less than two months after the country surpassed 800,000 fatalities.

Friday's sombre milestone comes 13 months into a U.S. vaccination drive that has been beset by misinformation and political strife, although the jabs have proved safe and highly effective at preventing serious illness and death.

"It is an astronomically high number," said Dr Ashish K Jha, dean of the Brown University School of Public Health. "If you had told most Americans two years ago as this pandemic was getting going that 900,000 Americans would die over the next few years, I think most people would not have believed it."

While the brutal Omicron wave is easing its grip on the U.S. -- with new cases of COVID-19 falling in 49 of the country's 50 states -- deaths are running at more than 2,400 per day on average, the highest level

since the last northern winter.

The U.S. has the highest reported coronavirus death toll of any country in the world, and even then, the actual number of lives lost directly or indirectly to COVID-19 is thought to be significantly higher.

Experts believe some COVID-19 deaths have been misattributed to other conditions, while some Americans are thought to have died of chronic illnesses such as heart disease and diabetes because they were unable or unwilling to obtain treatment during the crisis. “We have underestimated our enemy here, and we have under-prepared to protect ourselves,” said Dr Joshua M Sharfstein, a public health professor at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Reverend Gina Anderson-Cloud, senior pastor of Fredericksburg United Methodist Church in Virginia, lost her dementia-stricken father after he was hospitalised for cancer surgery and then isolated in a COVID-19 ward. He went into cardiac arrest, was revived, but died about a week later.

She had planned to be by his bedside, but the rules barred her from going to the hospital. She said she wonders if his condition was made worse by his isolation or if he was scared, and how many other cases like his there are. “I think it’s important for us not to be numbed. Each one of those numbers is someone,” Anderson-Cloud said. “Those are mothers, fathers, children, our elders.”

As COVID-19 has become one of the top three causes of death in the US, behind heart disease and cancer, Jha and other health experts are raising frustrations that US policymakers are seemingly running out of ideas for getting people vaccinated.

Sixty-four percent of Americans, or about 212 million people, are fully vaccinated, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). “There aren’t a whole lot of tools left. We need to double down and come up with new ones,” Jha said.

When the vaccine drive rolled out in mid-December 2020, the death toll stood at about 300,000. It hit 600,000 in mid-June 2021 and 700,000 on October 1. It reached 800,000 on December 14.

The latest 100,000 deaths encompass those caused by both the Delta and Omicron variants, the latter of which began spreading rapidly in December and quickly became the predominant strain in the United States.

While Omicron has proved less likely to cause severe illness than Delta, the greater number of people who became infected with Omicron contributed to the high number of deaths.

<https://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/internacionales/285164-us-covid-death-toll-surpasses-900000>



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