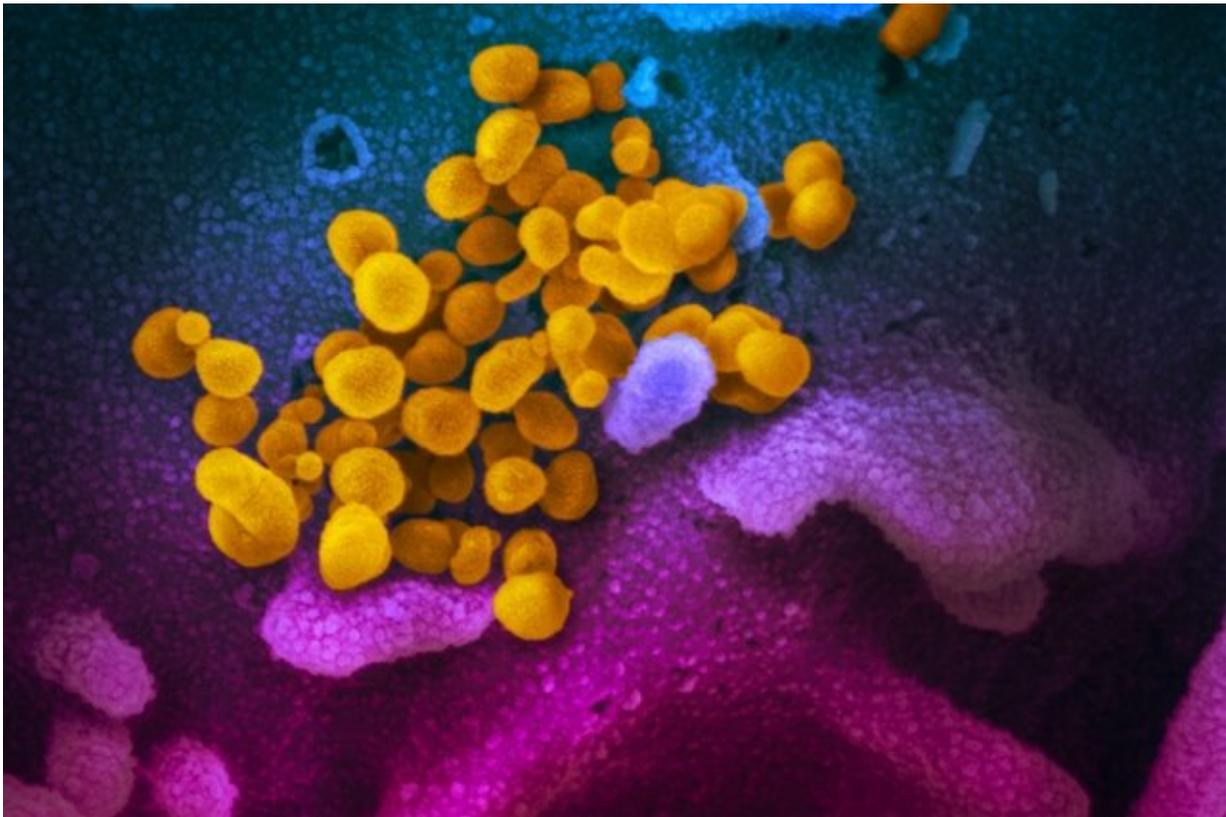


Romania hits pandemic record of nearly 20,000 infections

January 21 2022, by Stephen McGrath



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

Romania on Friday hit a new pandemic record of 19,649 COVID-19

infections amid a rapid rise of cases, but hospitalizations and deaths remain significantly lower compared to the previous wave, official data shows.

Just a month ago Romania was registering fewer than a thousand coronavirus infections a day. But daily cases have skyrocketed since the emergence of the highly transmissible omicron variant.

Despite the record case number, only 49 deaths were reported, compared with several hundred a day during October and November. Of the 49, 43 were unvaccinated, authorities said.

The head of Romania's Department for Emergency Situations, Raed Arafat, told a news conference Thursday that vaccination "remains the solution to avoid serious illness."

"Unfortunately, none of the young people who died in the last 24 hours were vaccinated," he said. "And the percentage of those who die, of those who are in (ICUs), are mostly [unvaccinated people](#), a situation that could have been prevented—if they were vaccinated."

Romania is the EU's second-least vaccinated nation against COVID-19, with just 49% of adults being double-jabbed against COVID-19, compared with a bloc average of 80%. Over the past week, Romania has administered fewer than 20,000 jabs a day, official data shows.

Dragos Zaharia, a primary care doctor at the Marius Nasta Institute of Pneumology in Bucharest, said it's a "big relief" that outpatient evaluations in his hospital are this time resulting in "a minimal number of admissions."

"The cases are much less severe than in the delta wave. I am not expecting a big impact on hospitalizations and deaths," he told The

Associated Press. "It seems the pandemic end is near."

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