Antivirals, some antibodies found to work well against BA.2 Omicron variant of COVID-19 virus
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“...we have antibodies that appear to be more effective against BA.2 compared with BA.1 or BA.1.1. That's good news, but we don't know whether what we found in in the lab translates into clinical settings," says Kawaoka, who previously tested how the BA.1 variant responds to treatments. "We also tested clinically available antiviral compounds, and they are all highly efficacious."

Kawaoka and his collaborators at UW-Madison and the National Institute of Infectious Diseases in Tokyo published their findings in the New England Journal of Medicine on March 9.

In lab experiments using non-human primate cells, Kawaoka's team tested seven monoclonal antibodies, three combinations of antibodies, and three antiviral treatments against the BA.2 variant. Most clinically approved antibody treatments are a combination of multiple antibodies.

The most effective antibody treatment against the BA.2 variant was Evusheld, which is approved in the U.S. to help prevent COVID-19 infection in people vulnerable to severe disease. The antibodies sold by Regeneron and GlaxoSmithKline were much more effective against BA.2 than they are against the BA.1 Omicron variant, although they were not as potent against BA.2 as they are against earlier versions of the virus.

Available anti-COVID treatments are typically less effective against new variants than they are against the original virus strain, because they were...
designed and tested against earlier versions of the virus. Researchers and pharmaceutical companies can design and test treatments against new variants, but that process takes months.


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