



Changing COVID-19 Situation from Maximum New Cases to Possible Pandemic End in the Near Future

Bando H^{1,2*}

¹Tokushima University / Medical Research, Tokushima, Japan

²Integrative Medicine Japan (IMJ), Shikoku Island division, Tokushima, Japan

*Corresponding author: Bando H, Tokushima University / Medical Research, Nakashowa 1-61, Tokushima 770-0943, Japan; Tel: +81-90-3187-2485; E-mail: pianomed@bronze.ocn.ne.jp

Abstract

Concerning COVID-19 problems, Japan showed improved situation in early Nov 2021, in which 20 out of 47 prefectures showed 0 cases on Nov 6. After that, 6th wave came for Jan-Apr 2022 and 7th wave started Jul 2022. New COVID-19 cases have been increasing rapidly now, and 20 prefectures showed largest ever on Aug 10, 2022. However, severely ill cases seem to be rare so far, which may be related to the characteristic of Omicron strain. Several effective vaccines have been developed, and then the discontinuation of COVID-19 pandemic across the world would be expected in the near future.

Keywords: COVID-19; John Hopkins University (JHU); Omicron; Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) Japan; National Institute of Infectious Diseases (NIID)

Commentary Article

Concerning COVID-19, medical, social and economic problems have been persisting across the world [1]. The prevalence has been increased and various coinfection and aftereffects have been observed [2]. For effective measures, several types of vaccination have been conducted [3]. For these circumstances, authors and collaborators have continued clinical practice and research concerning integrative medicine (IM), primary care (PC), atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (ASCVD), and so on. Among them, we have reported impressive situation of COVID-19 in Japan concerning negative excess mortality [4,5]. Japanese people can always control our daily life for protecting virus infection such as masking, washing hands, keeping calm and avoiding gathering.

Consequently, only a few patients of COVID-19 were present in all Japan during in early Nov 2021. At that time, delta strain of COVID-19 was main strain type which showed rather strong poisonous characteristic. We have reported the rare and impressive situation [6]. The 5th peak was found on August 20, but it reduced sharply. After that, average new case showed 19-34 for three weeks. On Nov 7, the death case became zero after 15

months. As United States has 50 states, Japan has 47 prefectures. Japan has reported the number of new cases every day for years [7]. Twenty out of 47 prefectures showed 0 cases of COVID-19 in early Nov 2021 [6].

Daily situation concerning COVID-19 worldwide has been announced by John Hopkins University (JHU) [8]. The data showed so far totally 588,205,478 cases, 6,429,955 deaths and totally vaccine doses administered 12,015,409,632 on August 12, 2022 (Figure 1). Similarly, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) Japan has continued daily report concerning various aspects of COVID-19 for long [7,9]. Furthermore, National Institute of Infectious Diseases (NIID) has provided necessary presentation of COVID-19 and its pathogen SARS-CoV-2 in the light of scientific novel epidemiology, testing, treatment and others [10].

The number and ratio of new infections in Japan were low so far compared to other countries. The 5th wave was in Aug-Oct 2021, and the period of Oct-Dec was stable [11]. Successively, 6th wave was observed with peaked in Jan-Apr 2022 [12]. The number of infected people increased sharply from July without convergence, which is 7th wave. The incidence of new COVID-19 infections is

Received date: 12 August 2022; Accepted date: 16 August 2022; Published date: 19 August 2022

Citation: Bando H (2022). Changing COVID-19 Situation from Maximum New Cases to Possible Pandemic End in the Near Future. SunText Rev Virol 3(1): 131.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51737/2766-5003.2022.031>

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shown over the past year (Figure 2). However, most of them are asymptomatic, and their hospitalization and severe cases are rare. Mutated viruses are considered to be highly infectious but less virulent. In other countries, examining kits are not so often used to check for new cases, but Japan has continued to conduct tests.

Combined with this situation, the number of new infections in Japan is now the highest in the world according to daily statistics by JHU [8] (Figure 1).

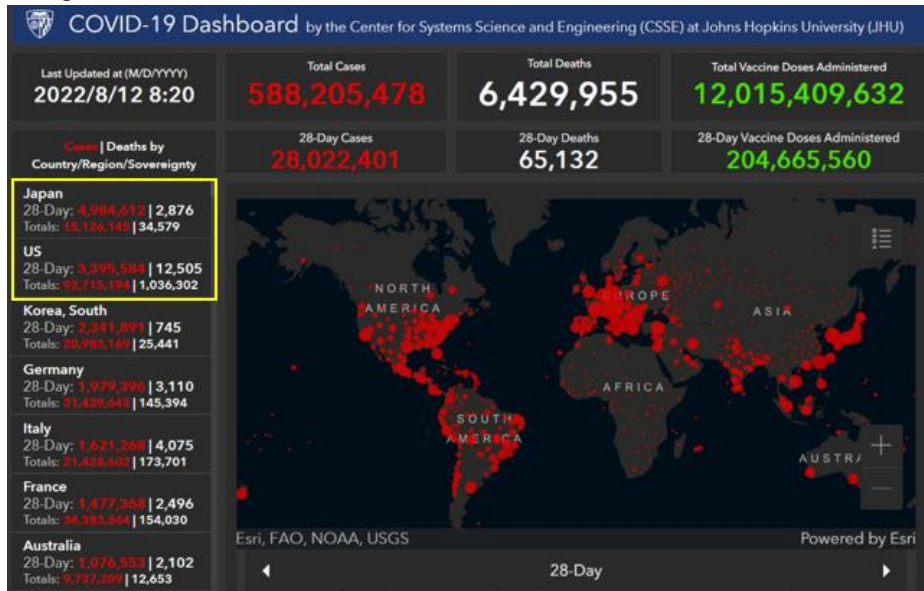


Figure 1: Data of new COVID-19 cases worldwide (JHU on Aug 12, 2022).

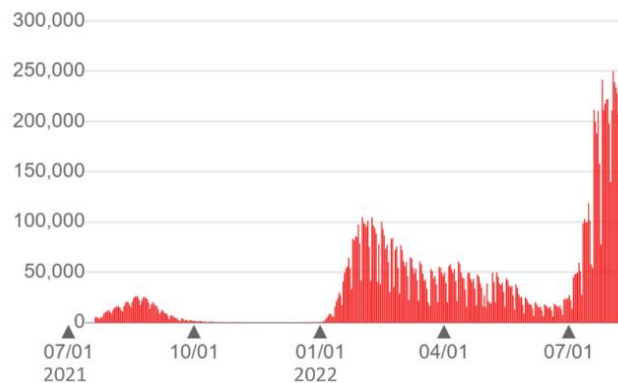


Figure 2: Changes in new COVID-19 cases for 1 year (July 2021-July 2022).

Next, from intranational aspect of COVID-19 infection, the maximum new infection cases were found on Aug 10, 2022. Furthermore, 20 out of 47 prefectures showed the highest number of cases (red color) in each statistic data (Figure 3). It is expected that daily counting the number of new infection cases will not be adopted in the future both in the world and also in Japan, and then these data would be considered significant.

As to the world data on Aug 12 by JHU, new COVID-19 cases in Japan were found more than US (Figure 1). There would be some related reasons. One of them would be the predominant situation of B.1.1.529 (Omicron) variant of SARS-CoV-2. According to CDC of United States, research was conducted from Sept 2021 to

Jan 2022 [13]. The sample size showed 73,869-45,810 in median during the period. The data of seroprevalence showed the elevation as 36.5%-63.7% in 18-49 years, 28.8%-49.8% in 50-64 years and 19.1%-33.2% in > 65years. In Feb 2022, about 75% of younger generation showed evidence of previous SARS-CoV-2 infection, where one third became seropositive after Dec 2021. In contrast, many Japanese people kept long for protective life with seronegative situation. Consequently, Japanese people are easy to be infected for Omicron with higher compromised condition. In Japan, the recommended way for preventing COVID-19 was refraining from closed, crowded and close-contact. It was certainly effective in earlier strains, but the current Omicron has

been known for aerosol transmission [14]. Masks for medical personnel are made of non-woven fabric, but masks for ordinary and young people are sometimes made of cloth, which is less

effective in preventing infection. This is also possible reason for increasing infection for Omicron [15].

