

The COVID-19 fear factor won't work forever - analysis

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Israel's prime minister has issued dire warnings about the "fifth wave" of [COVID-19](#) that he says has begun. His warnings are important because Israel has been a bellwether in some ways of the pandemic's trajectory. The first country to do mass vaccinations, it has often led the way. When there was waning immunity from vaccines, Israel was the first to give widespread boosters in August – and now it is moving towards offering a fourth shot of the vaccine.

But there is a fine line between being cautious and issuing warnings to get

people to take precautions, and being alarmist and spreading fear.

Bennett appears to increasingly be using fear as a stick. He warns that there will be rising serious cases, according to reports on Monday, and also emphasizes the importance of vaccinating children. "Every hour you wait is a wasted hour. After a first shot it will take children four to five weeks to be protected," he said. "If you wait for the wave to hit, it will be too late."

During the pandemic, the public has often been left in the dark, out of the loop of government decision-makers. They have also been told, especially by American media, to follow "science" – and those who are hesitant or question the policies are mocked for "doing their own research." This doesn't seem reasonable two years into the pandemic.

We trust parents with information about other threats to their children, from things like measles or tetanus. We trust people when we tell them that eating raw eggs or fish could be dangerous. We don't mock them for doing their own research. Why? Because if you google "is it safe to eat off a surface I just chopped raw chicken on" there is ample information out there.



A medical worker carries RT-PCR swab tests at a pre-departure coronavirus disease (COVID-19) testing facility, as countries react to the new coronavirus Omicron variant, outside the international terminal at Sydney Airport in Sydney, Australia, November 29, 2021. (credit: REUTERS/LOREN ELLIOT/FILE PHOTO)

Israel has had 1.3 million cases and 8,242 deaths according to the latest Covid data. That data isn't usually segmented by deaths from the Delta and Omicron variants.

Israel has a population of around 9.2 million people. Large numbers of Israelis have already had Covid, and large numbers are also vaccinated. As a young society, there are also large numbers who do not qualify for the vaccines yet.

It's a bit difficult to add up all this data: Some 16 million vaccine doses have been administered, but millions nevertheless still remain in the category of unvaccinated or partially vaccinated because they didn't get a

booster or never got a first dose. Even so, we are a highly vaccinated society.

There is a sense that governments like Israel and the US, which discuss health data and likely discuss their experiences so far, prefer ham-handed fear mongering and sloganeering designed to incentivize certain behavior. That is partly why people are denied access to areas for lack of a green pass. Is it "science" that guides the green pass model or is it a theory that says people want the "reward" of going to the gym and shopping so they will get vaccinated to do it?

[US President Joe Biden](#) has also done the fearmongering messaging, claiming that this was now a "pandemic of the unvaccinated" in September and claiming "unvaccinated" people risk a "winter of severe illness and death."

Meanwhile, Israel and the US are putting up new travel restrictions and other restrictions that impact the vaccinated as well. If the unvaccinated were the ones risking everything, then why are the vaccinated in such need of being protected from them via a green pass to enter gyms or malls?

Mixed messaging on Omicron is also confusing. News reports say Omicron appears less severe. That isn't people doing their "own research" or being misled by misinformation – that's what major media says. When a significant percentage of society already had Covid and survived, and they are still being told they are at risk – whether they took vaccines but now need boosters, or didn't take vaccines at all – the public will start to be skeptical.

The number one reason for not just doing sloganeering and fearmongering two years into the pandemic is because an educated public that is respected by its officials will make better decisions than a public being told to be afraid all the time.

The public has accepted lockdowns and travel chaos and missing holidays for years now. But when the government decides to mandate fourth "booster" shots or says it will reduce the time between shots from five to three months, people wonder what the future holds. The public rightly wonders why they need more and more boosters for vaccines that supposedly work well.

Governments are afraid to have a fuller discussion about the future of waning immunity, that green passes are not really to protect people but rather to incentivize them, and that a less severe but highly transmissible variant is running rampant, so you might as well do your best to be protected.

Fearmongering won't work forever.

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