**Future of the Covid-19 pandemic**

[**Dr Muhammad Nauman Zahid**](https://nation.com.pk/Columnist/dr-muhammad-nauman-zahid)

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“When will this pandemic end?” We have been asking this question since the last few months but still, there is no answer. Although there are chances that Covid-19 will become a mild infection, we may not see a future free of the coronavirus according to the scientists of infectious diseases of the Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

There are very few examples in history when an infectious disease was successfully eradicated like smallpox. For complete eradication, we require sterilising immunity, which means that vaccinated people cannot get infected or spread the disease. The current vaccines against Covid-19 do not produce sterilising immunity, which means that people can still get a mild infection, but these vaccines can protect them from serious complications or hospitalisation.

The main goal of this vaccination campaign is to achieve herd immunity to prevent the spread of the virus. The factors which can influence the achievement of herd immunity include the availability of vaccines as well as the emergence of virus variants that are resistant to these vaccines. Covid-19 had different variants but we are not sure yet if these variants can bypass vaccine-induced immunity.

[At least 54 dead after COVID hospital in Iraq catches fire](https://nation.com.pk/13-Jul-2021/at-least-54-dead-after-covid-hospital-in-iraq-catches-fire)

There are many other factors that will affect the journey ahead and it includes roles of governments, global health organisations and the behavior of citizens in every society. Depending upon the participation of above said stakeholders, there are many possible outcomes. An optimistic scenario is the one in which Covid-19 vaccines are effective against all current and future variants of this coronavirus and these vaccines are distributed equally in every country in a well-coordinated effort to get global control. This optimistic scenario will need international cooperation and ample funding but still it would take a long time to achieve.

Alternatively, there is a pessimistic scenario, in which variants of coronavirus emerge with the ability to escape vaccine immunity. In response to this situation, only high-income countries will develop modified vaccine for their population while the poor countries will struggle with repeated waves and vaccines which are unable to control new viral variants. This will ultimately lead to repeated outbreaks even in high-income countries as no country will be safe until all countries are safe.

[UN sends 50 truckloads of humanitarian aid to Ethiopia’s Tigray](https://nation.com.pk/13-Jul-2021/un-sends-50-truckloads-of-humanitarian-aid-to-ethiopia-s-tigray)

There are many other alternate and intermediate scenarios depending upon some other factors like vaccine hesitancy, disbeliefs, myths, and disinformation among society. Due to these factors, the route of normality will be much longer.

In addition, we do not have information about the duration of immune protection with current vaccines and their efficacies against new variants of coronavirus. Moreover, the need and time for a booster dose of these vaccines is still unknown.

Various models suggest that a winter surge of Covid-19 infection may occur but due to vaccination, hospitalisation and death rates are expected to be on the lower side as compared to the last winter. The scale of winter surge will also depend on behaviors like mask wearing and social distancing. It will be difficult to maintain social distancing in next winter due to public fatigue and economic effects of pandemic.

In order to handle the future consequences of this pandemic, advance planning and a range of strategies should be designed. First of all, we need an intensified global vaccination campaign where every country receives vaccine according to its population. Secondly, a vigilant surveillance system is required for emerging variants and modification of vaccines to enhance their efficacy will be required if emerging variants show the potential to reduce the efficacy of vaccines.

[COVID-19 deaths on the rise again globally: WHO chief](https://nation.com.pk/13-Jul-2021/covid-19-deaths-on-the-rise-again-globally-who-chief)

Moreover, it will be important to manage the intensive care units during the possible winter surge. It can be achieved by reducing transmission in peak months through social distancing, mandatory vaccination, wearing masks and avoiding large meetings in peak months.

It will be very important to change the lifestyle of people at risk. People above 65 years of age and with different health conditions must wear masks even if they have received their vaccine. Moreover, they should avid indoor dining, concerts, sports events or any large gathering in which transmission risk is high.

The prospect of persistent and seasonal Covid-19 is real. The world needs to learn more in the coming months about vaccine immunity, viral variants, and new-generation vaccines. The time between waves is important to improve the health systems as well. Every country must prepare for such a scenario by improving their surveillance system, medical and public health responses, and by launching new socioeconomic programs.