Variants and Vaccines: The TAG-CO-VAC, a WHO expert committee

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As an advisory body to WHO

- make recommendations to WHO on the methods to assess the impact of VOCs on vaccines
- provide interpretation of available evidence on the effect of VOCs on vaccines, including but not limited to vaccine effectiveness
- recommend to WHO, for each COVID-19 vaccine platform, adaptations (if any) needed so that vaccines continue to safely provide WHO-recommended levels of protection against VOCs.

https://www.who.int/groups/technical-advisory-group-on-covid-19-vaccine-composition-(tag-co-vac)
• The evolution of SARS-CoV-2 could substantially impact the COVID-19 pandemic and may require adaptations of the currently available countermeasures.

• Adjustment of vaccine composition may be needed to optimize the performance of COVID-19 vaccines due to the emergence of variants of concern (VOCs) infecting humans.

• The regular production and review of the available evidence is critical to assess the impact of VOCs on countermeasures, issue timely recommendations on potential modifications and identify needs for further research and investigations.
WHO periodically organizes consultations with an independent group of experts, the Technical Advisory Group on COVID-19 Vaccine Composition (TAG-CO-VAC), to review the evidence and analyse the implications of emerging VOCs on the performance of COVID-19 vaccines.

TAG-CO-VAC may recommend to WHO adaptations of vaccine composition from a global public health perspective and guided by the principles of equitable access.
Information sharing and cross reporting among WHO expert committees

For comprehensive review and a well-coordinated response to the pandemic situation and post-pandemic control of COVID-19, TAG-CO-VAC will share information with other WHO Expert Committees including:

- **Expert Committee on Biological Standardization (ECBS)**
  - provides recommendations and guidelines for the manufacturing, licensing and control of blood products and related in vitro diagnostic tests, biotechnology products and vaccines along with the establishment of WHO Biological Reference Materials.

- **Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE)**
  - is charged with advising WHO on overall global policies and strategies, ranging from vaccines and technology, research and development, to delivery of immunization and its linkages with other health interventions.

- **Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for Infectious Hazards (STAG-IH)**
  - provides independent advice and analysis to WHO Health Emergencies Programme on the infectious hazards that may pose a potential threat to global health security.

- **Technical Advisory Group on SARS-CoV-2 Virus Evolution (TAG-VE)**
  - periodically monitors and evaluates the evolution of SARS-CoV-2 and assess if specific mutations and combinations of mutations alter the behaviour of the virus.
Strong, multidisciplinary mechanism of external experts for evidence-based decision making

**Aim:** Monitor & assess SARS-CoV-2 variants and evaluate their impact on countermeasures, including vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics or effectiveness of public health and social measures.

**TAG-VE**
- Determines which variants warrant further investigations
- Assesses whether variants alter
  - transmission or disease characteristics or
  - impact vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics or
  - effectiveness of public health and social measures

**TAG-CO-VAC**
- Assesses the impact of Variants of Concern on current COVID-19 vaccines
- Determines whether changes to vaccine composition are needed

**SAGE**
- Advises on Vaccine use and implementation

**COVID-19 advisory group landscape**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position/Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr Supamit Chunsutiwat</td>
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<td>Professor Cheryl Cohen</td>
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<td>Professor John Peter Figueroa</td>
<td>Professor of Public Health, Epidemiology and HIV/AIDS at the University of the West Indies</td>
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<td>Professor Thomas Fleming</td>
<td>Professor, member of the Scientific Steering Committee for the WHO Solidarity COVID-19 Vaccines Trial.</td>
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<td>Professor David Goldblatt</td>
<td>Professor of Vaccinology and Immunology and Head of the Immunobiology Section at the Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health</td>
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<td>Professor Priya Abraham</td>
<td>Director of Indian Council of Medical Research</td>
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<td>Professor Paul Fine</td>
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<td>Professor Samba Sow</td>
<td>Professor of Medicine, Directeur général, Centre pour la mise au point de vaccins du Mali, Centre National d'Appui à la Lutte contre la Maladie, Djicoroni para Bamako, Mali</td>
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<td>Chief scientist at the National Institute for Food and Drug Control (NiFDC) of China</td>
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<td>Dr David Wentworth</td>
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<td>Head of Biosecurity Research Program in Kirby Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Amadou Alpha Sall</td>
<td>Director of Institut Pasteur de Dakar and WHO Collaborating Center for Arboviruses and Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers, Senegal</td>
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**Chair**

Professor Kanta Subbarao
Director of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Reference and Research on Influenza and Professor, Department of Microbiology and Immunology
TAG-CO-VAC Secretariat

- Sylvie Briand
- Rebecca Grant
- Marie-Ange Wambo
- Jillian Sacks

- Contact: tagcovac@who.int
- Webpage: Technical Advisory Group on COVID-19 Vaccine Composition (who.int)