



FOR IMMEDIATE REPORTING

**ISSUANCE OF CORRECTION DIRECTION UNDER THE
PROTECTION FROM ONLINE FALSEHOODS AND MANIPULATION
ACT ON FALSEHOODS ON COVID-19 AND THEOMICRON
VARIANT**

A video posted by Goh Meng Seng on 27 November 2021 on various online locations on Facebook contained false and egregious claims about the Omicron variant of the COVID-19 virus. In particular, there is currently no basis to conclude that:

- (i) The COVID-19 and HIV viruses could combine and become another airborne virus; and
- (ii) Omicron is vaccine-resistant, and vaccines are totally useless against it.

2. The Minister for Health has instructed the Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act (POFMA) Office to issue a Correction Direction to Goh Meng Seng for these falsehoods. Goh is required to publish the correction notices as specified by POFMA Office for each Facebook post containing the falsehoods.

Corrections and clarifications on falsehoods regarding COVID-19 and the Omicron variant in Facebook posts by Goh Meng Seng

3. The Facebook post is misleading and seeks to sow public confusion about the COVID-19 virus as well as mistrust of COVID-19 vaccines in stating that:

- i. The COVID-19 and HIV viruses could combine and become another virus which has the characteristics of the HIV and COVID-19 viruses;
- ii. The COVID-19 and HIV viruses could combine in a fully vaccinated patient to become an airborne HIV virus which is vaccine resistant;
- iii. It has been scientifically established that the Omicron variant is most probably the combination of the HIV and COVID-19 viruses, which combination had happened before 4 June 2021; and
- iv. The currently available vaccines are totally useless against the Omicron variant.

4. These claims are false and without any scientific basis. Genetic recombination (that is, the exchange of genetic information) of viruses is known to occur only in genetically related viruses. The HIV and SARS-CoV-2 viruses are not related, and it is implausible in biological terms that these viruses can undergo genetic recombination. To date, there is also no scientific evidence that such a recombination between HIV and SARS-CoV-2 has occurred, contrary to Goh's assertion.

5. The claim that HIV might become transmissible by droplets in the air is also unfounded. Viruses simply do not change drastically enough to take on vastly different properties. HIV is transmitted via bodily fluids, e.g., blood, semen, or vaginal secretions, and will remain to be so.
6. There is simply no scientific evidence to make the claim that the Omicron variant is a combination of the HIV and COVID-19 viruses.
7. There is no evidence to suggest that the currently available COVID-19 vaccines are totally useless against the Omicron variant.
8. Studies are ongoing, and there is currently insufficient data on how the Omicron variant affects vaccine effectiveness. Most scientists believe that existing vaccines will retain some effectiveness against the Omicron variant, but protection may be less due to the large number of mutations in the Omicron variant.
9. For facts of the case, please refer to the Factly article “Corrections and Clarifications on falsehoods regarding content about COVID-19 and the Omicron variant in a Facebook post by Goh Meng Seng” at <https://www.gov.sg/article/factly031221> .
10. The Government takes a serious view of these falsehoods and a police report has been made in relation to the video.
11. We advise members of the public not to speculate and/or spread misinformation which may cause public alarm, and to refer to credible sources of information instead. Please visit www.moh.gov.sg for the latest information on COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccinations.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH
3 DECEMBER 2021

For media queries, please contact: