

## THE EPOCH TIMES



A medic collects a swab sample from an Israeli border guard at a COVID-19 drive-through testing site in a file photo. (Ahmad Gharabli/AFP via Getty Images)

PREMIUM **INTERNATIONAL**

# Doctor Who Helped Discover Omicron Says She Was Pressured Not to Reveal It's Mild

By [Jack Phillips](#) | February 10, 2022 Updated: February 10, 2022

**A** Print

The doctor who helped discover the [Omicron](#) COVID-19 variant claimed that she was pressured by several government officials not to reveal that it was a milder strain.

Speaking to Germany's [Welt newspaper](#), Dr. Angelique Coetzee, who is currently the head of the South African Medical Association, said that during discussions with European officials, she was told not to say that Omicron patients presented milder symptoms than prior COVID-19 variants.

“I was told not to publicly state that it was a mild illness. I have been asked to refrain from making such statements and to say that it is a serious illness. I declined,” she told Welt in response to a question about her initial discussions about Omicron with European officials.

Coetzee did not elaborate on which officials allegedly told her to keep quiet. In the interview, Coetzee said that South African officials did not try to pressure her, claiming that later, she was criticized by authorities in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.

She [continued](#): “I am a clinician and based on the clinical picture there are no indications that we are dealing with a very serious disease. The course is mostly mild. I’m not saying you won’t get sick if you’re mild,” according to a German-to-English translation.

“The definition of mild COVID-19 disease is clear, and it is a [World Health Organization] definition: patients can be treated at home and oxygen or hospitalization is not required,” Coetzee said, adding: “A serious illness is one in which we see acute pulmonary respiratory infections: people need oxygen, maybe even artificial respiration. We saw that with Delta—but not with Omicron. So I said to people, ‘I can’t say it like that because it’s not what we’re seeing.’”

During her discussions, she recalled what she had told the other officials. “What I said at one point—because I was just tired of it—was: In [South Africa](#), this is a mild illness, but in Europe, it is a very serious one. That’s what your politicians wanted to hear.”

In late November, Coetzee said in several interviews, including one [with CNN](#), that the “majority of what we are presenting to primary health care practitioners are extremely mild cases, so mild to moderate ... and so, these patients, it means they don’t need to be hospitalized for now.”

“We try to get the message out there to the world to say listen,” she added, “we’re not saying this is not going to be a disease going forward that’s going to cause severe disease; it will cause severe disease, but if this disease can cause to more than the majority of people mild symptoms, easily treatable at home, no need for admission, that’s a first prize.”

Since [Omicron was controversially named](#) as a “variant of concern” by WHO in November 2021, a number of [studies](#) have suggested the variant presents milder symptoms than the Delta variant. Currently, according to data from U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Omicron makes up the vast majority of current COVID-19 infections nationwide.

A study from a group of Japanese and American researchers, [published](#) in late December, found that Omicron causes less damaging effects to the lungs, throat, and nose.

The Epoch Times has contacted the European Medicines Agency for comment on Coetzee’s remarks.