



The Daily Dish

Rethinking the Pandemic Strategy

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There was more good medical news yesterday when Pfizer [announced](#) laboratory evidence that Paxlovid, its oral COVID-19 therapy, was effective against the Omicron variant. Per *The Wall Street Journal*: “Pfizer said Tuesday the drug’s main component, nirmatrelvir, worked in three separate laboratory studies. Patients take two tablets of nirmatrelvir with one tablet of another antiviral called ritonavir twice a day for five days.” Although ramping up production will take time, the announcement raises the possibility of a greater range of responses to the pandemic, with more emphasis on testing and therapeutics, and less on mandates for lockdowns, vaccines, and masks. Testing, in particular, remains an Achilles heel of the pandemic response, and rapid testing would be necessary to deploy Paxlovid (and other therapies) in a timely fashion.

The medical development dovetails nicely with the recent [call](#) (as reported by *The New York Times*) by six former Biden transition advisers “for Mr. Biden to adopt an entirely new domestic pandemic strategy geared to the ‘new normal’ of living with the virus indefinitely, not to wiping it out.” In particular, one of the advisers opined, “From a macroperspective, it feels like we are always fighting yesterday’s crisis and not necessarily thinking what needs to be done today to prepare us for what comes next.”

As regular readers of Eakinomics will attest, a more diversified approach has long appeared to be the most sensible. This seems to be even more true with the Omicron variant, which appears to manifest as more like a seasonal flu for many who are infected. With many aspects of the prevention regime yielding litigation – health vaccine mandate, in; broad vaccine mandate, out; airline mask mandate, in – and political heat, there are good political economy reasons for the Biden Administration to move away from a divisive regime and toward one that has greater chance at unifying the country.