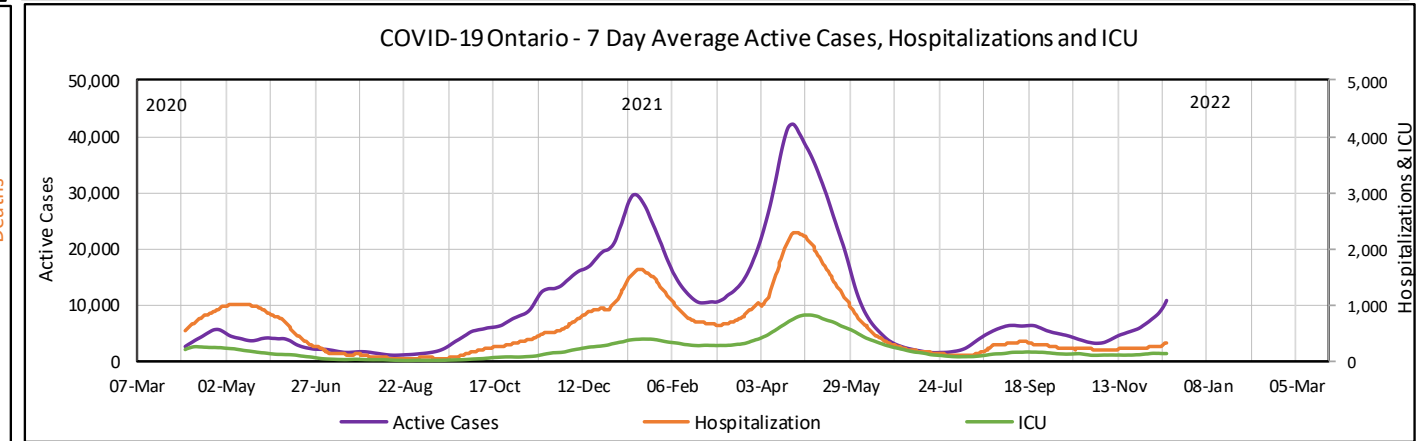
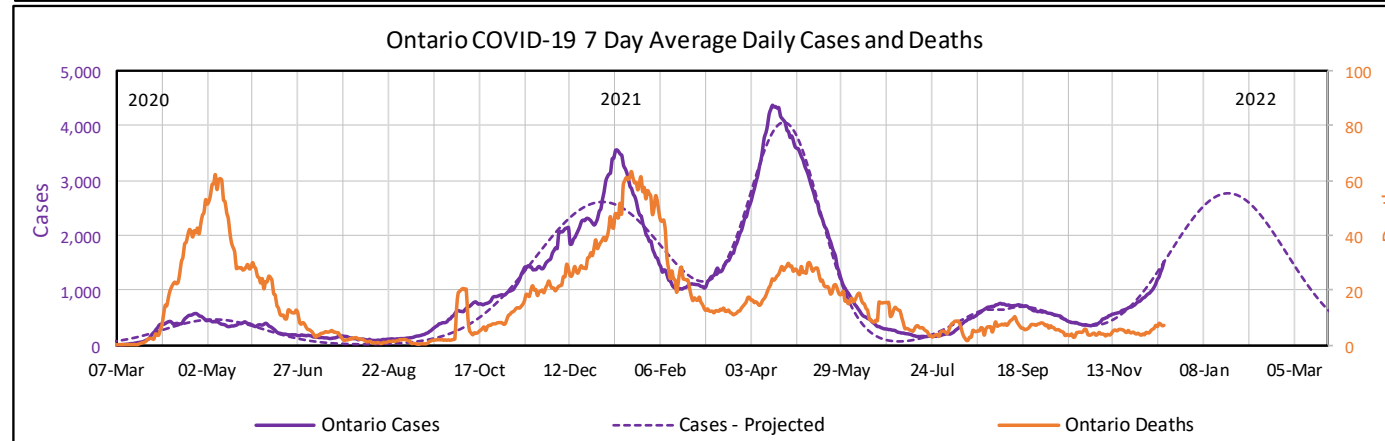
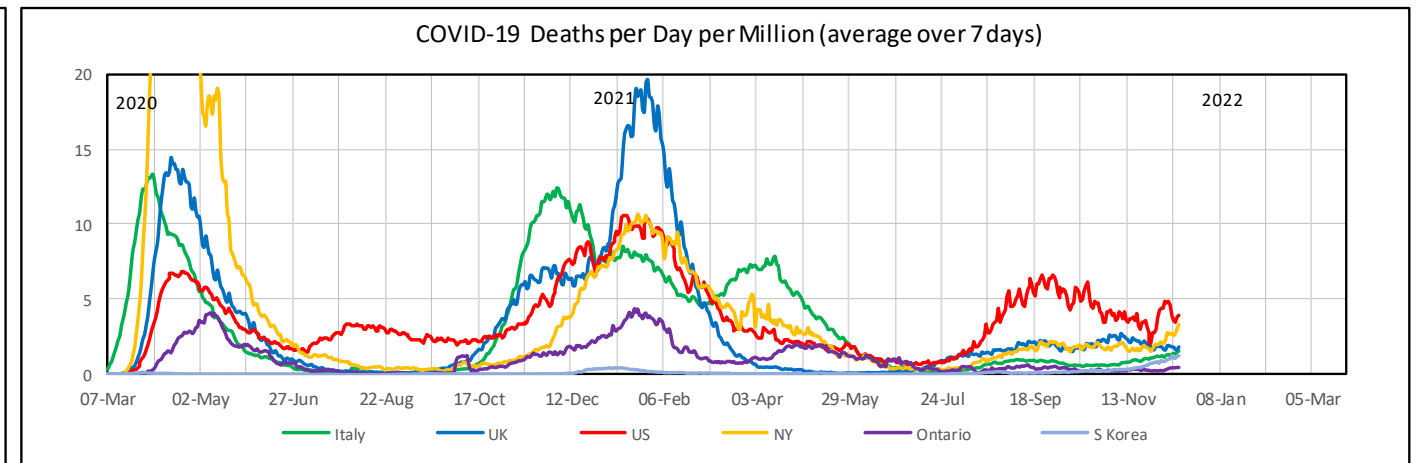
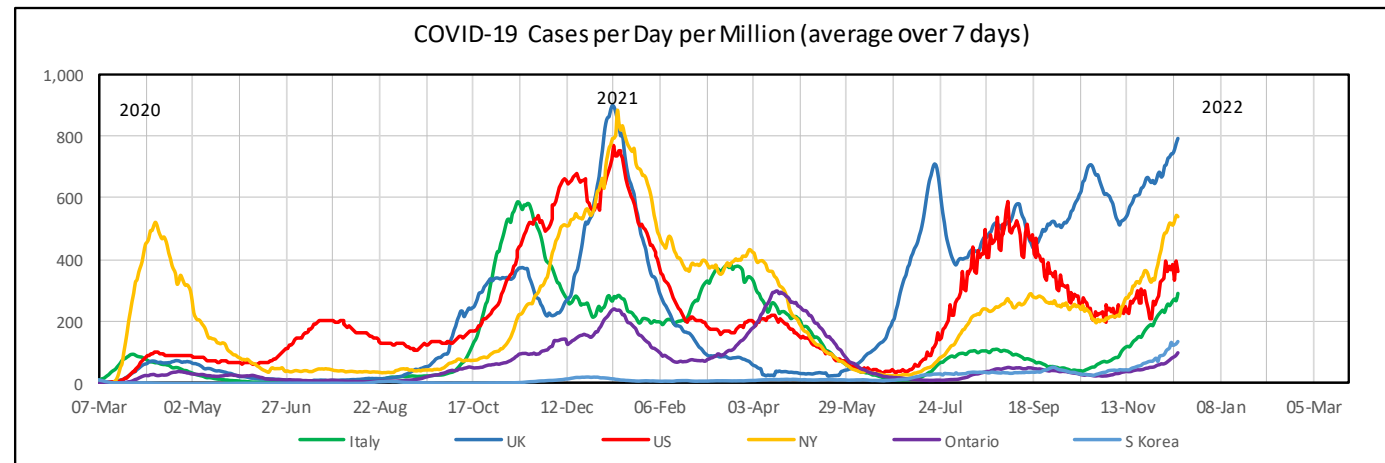
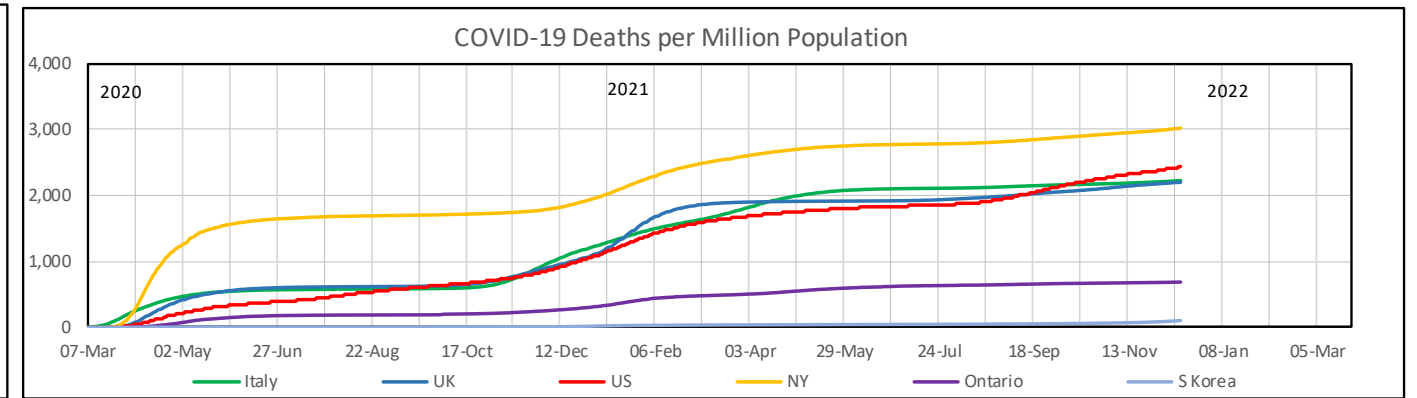
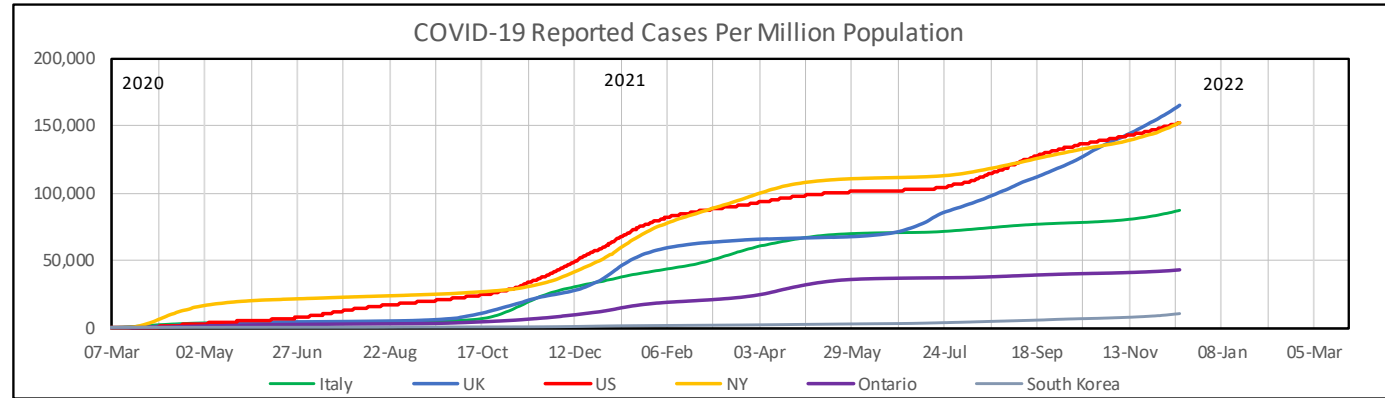


COVID-19 Observations – 16 December, 2021 – by Alex Harrington



Everyone seems to be losing their mind about the omicron variant. Close the schools! Restrict gathering size! Barbeque Rudolph! If it's not that, we hear it's just a cold! Herd immunity will save us! Barbeque Rudolph!

We knew omicron, or something like it, was coming, and in our typical afraid to admit things in case it's not pleasant mode, we are again unprepared. We've known for months that boosters would be needed, and only now are we allowing everyone to get them. We've known for generations that vaccinations work, but we still will not mandate vaccinations in a pandemic that is the worst we've seen in one hundred years. We've had rapid tests for a long time, but are hesitant to use them because they're not perfect.

All I can say is what I've been saying for a long time – vaxx, mask and distance. The government will do something but we really don't need much right now. If we vaxx, mask and distance all we need are boosters, vaccine mandates and testing (I haven't had a testing rant for a while). We were vaccinating a quarter million people a day in June – we have to find a way to re-ignite that enthusiasm. One way is strong vaccination mandates. We need rapid tests widely distributed. I've said all of this before – it didn't happen then and it probably won't happen now.

The big problem is the same as it has always been. Our medical system is not designed to deal with a lot of people getting sick at the same time in a pandemic, or for any other reason. It will deal with a certain level of illness, but sustained high levels will crush it. I don't know if there are things that can be done to make the system better at dealing with these things. It doesn't really matter, because right now we're stuck with what we have, and what we learn from this is still to be seen.

To protect the system, we try to keep cases down. Some will get sick – even some vaccinated people, but they will usually have milder cases. This keeps people out of the hospitals, reduces the stay of those in the hospitals, and reduces the numbers that require ICU care. Vaccination is key to keeping cases mild. Masking and distancing are key to keeping cases down. It's really not very difficult.

One problem causing reluctance among people is news that the omicron variant tends to have milder symptoms, even if it is more transmissible. Just a flu, so no need to go to extremes is what people say. There are a few things wrong with that. A SARS virus (which covid is) is not to be messed with - these are respiratory viruses, not flu viruses. Even if the initial symptoms are mild, we know nothing of the long-term effects that have been seen in all other variants. There is no reason to think they won't happen with the omicron variant. So it is not to be taken lightly. But there is also no need to shut everything down. We know what to do – vaxx, mask and distance.

I know few of you look at the charts any more – but I've rejuvenated my covid model for Ontario and its current results are on the Ontario cases chart (bottom left, above). It shows we can expect a covid winter for 2022. If we vaxx, mask and distance, hospitalizations and deaths should stay low, and if we get enough vaccinated, we should have a better spring.

If we're lucky, they won't barbeque Rudolph, and we'll still have Xmas.

Take care of yourselves and don't endanger others.

