

COVID-19 Challenges – a South African perspective

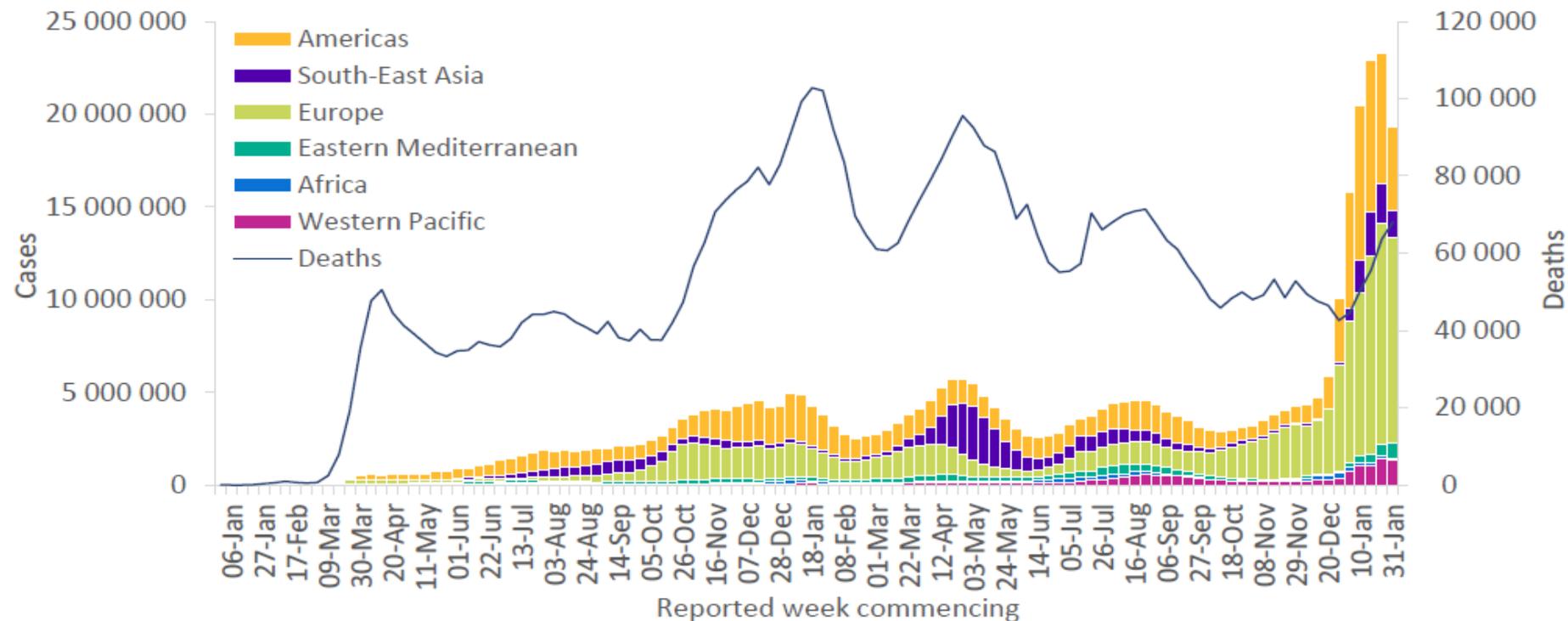
Dr Michelle Groome

Head, Division of Public Health Surveillance and Response

National Institute for Communicable Diseases

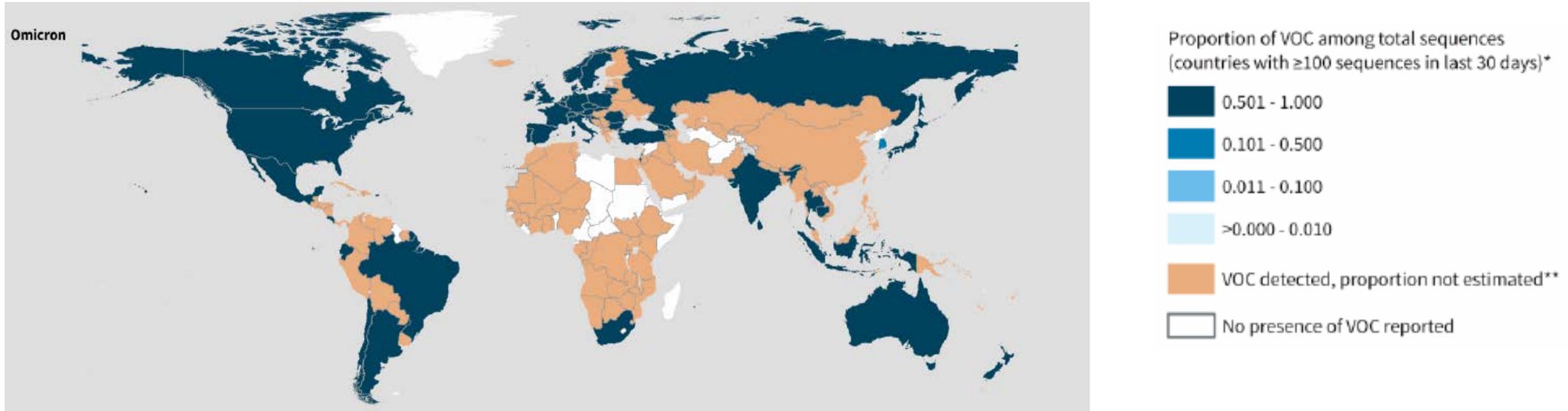
09 Feb 2022

Laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases by WHO region



- African region accounts for only 2% of the global cumulative COVID-19 confirmed cases
- South Africa accounts for 44% of cumulative COVID-19 confirmed cases in the African region
- **Differential testing capacity** leads to biased view of the true burden and distribution of COVID-19 cases

Detection of Omicron variant globally



Prevalence of variants of concern (VOCs) Delta and Omicron in the last 30 days, data as of 8 February 2022

- **Differential sequencing capacity** leads to biased view of the true burden and distribution of SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern

Implications – global reaction to detection of Omicron in Southern Africa

“Countries ban travellers from southern Africa over Covid variant”

FINANCIAL TIMES

Southern Africa: Last in line for vaccines, first in line for travel bans

BILL & MELINDA
GATES foundation

AS IT HAPPENED

Global rush to ban travellers from southern Africa over new Covid-19 variant

- Punished for advanced ability to detect new COVID-19 variants early: worldwide travel restrictions on flights from southern Africa were hurriedly introduced
- "Excellent science should be applauded and not punished," - the South African foreign ministry
- Severe harm to tourism and other sectors of the economy
- Within hours/days: Omicron detected in Belgium, Botswana, Israel and Hong Kong
- WHO cautioned countries against hastily imposing travel restrictions linked to the variant, saying they should take a "risk-based and scientific approach"