

## Letters

### Is it time to reconsider ring vaccination for COVID-19?

Fisman and Tuite's timely evidence of the increasing virulence of SARS-CoV-2 variants<sup>1</sup> may increase the remorse felt by unvaccinated victims of COVID-19. Experience in Canada and around the world shows coming waves of SARS-CoV-2 infection to be caused by, and to affect, the unvaccinated population.

In June 2021, Public Health Ontario completed an excellent review of ring vaccination as a strategy against SARS-CoV-2 infection and concluded that its application was premature.<sup>2</sup> Ring vaccination has been used successfully to suppress Ebola and smallpox.<sup>3,4</sup> It targets 2 groups: people who are recently infected, for whom vaccination is known as postexposure prophylaxis (PEP), and their wide circle of unvaccinated contacts. This was essentially the strategy during the initial roll-out of the SARS-CoV-2 vaccine, where areas of high virus prevalence were prioritized for vaccination. Theoretically, PEP benefits people who are recently infected by converting their naive immune response, which is modified by the virus in patients who develop severe or chronic COVID-19, into the type 1 immune response of people who are vaccinated, which eliminates the virus.

Fisman and Tuite's prediction of a more deadly wave caused by variants of concern has already occurred in parts of Canada where release from lockdown was premature. Pressure to remove lockdown measures elsewhere will be irresistible

soon. Now is the time to introduce a monitored ring-vaccination strategy, which may help relieve the remorse felt by people who are unvaccinated and have COVID-19.

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### References

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**Competing interests:** None declared.

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