Forbes: Predicting The Course And Impact Of The Covid Crisis In The New Year

From the article:

> The Covid-19 pandemic, which has had more ups and downs than a rollercoaster ride, shows no signs of ending anytime soon. The latest turn of events was the discovery last week of the Omicron variant, which scientists are scrambling to understand.
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> This crisis reminds me of something American baseball legend Yogi Berra once said: “It ain’t over till it’s over.” His acute observation is underscored by the following predictions from doctors, experts and others about the coronavirus crisis in 2022.
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> 100,000 More Deaths
> Harry Nelson is the founder and managing partner of Nelson Hardiman, a healthcare law firm. He said, “For the unvaccinated…Covid-19 will remain much more of a wildcard. I suspect we will see at least another 100,000 Americans dead in 2022, drawn from the ranks of the unvaccinated.
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> “As time goes on and this stark contrast between the respective risk levels becomes more apparent, I expect vaccination rates to increase from the current 60% to closer to 70% of the U.S. population,” Nelson concluded.
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> Another Winter Wave
> Dr. Andrew Noymer is an associate professor of population health and disease prevention with the University of California Irvine Program in Public Health. He predicted that, “The pandemic in 2022 will have another winter wave, less severe and less deadly than in winter 2020-21, but nonetheless still significant, and, in most places, more concerning than the ‘Delta [variant] wave’ of summer 2021.
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> “Omicron is a variable here, but even without Omicron, there will be a winter wave. The regulatory environment for retail businesses (masking, vaccine verification, and so on) will continue to vary from place to place, but in general the pandemic will not cease but become the ‘new normal’, in an only-slightly attenuated state from right now.”
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> High Rates Of Infection
> Dr. Rich Parker a former medical director of Beth Israel Deaconess Care Organization, is now a hospice physician, medical consultant and chief medical officer of Arcadia. “I predict that in 2022, we will still see high rates of infection in areas with low vaccination rates. These areas will have stressed healthcare systems with shortages of healthcare staff and hospital beds.
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> “Businesses in these areas will also have more difficulty hiring and retaining workers who do not wish to be at further risk of contracting Covid. Therefore, businesses can prepare for 2022 by either mandating vaccination or offering significant incentives for employees to get vaccinated, including the booster shots,” he advised.
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> A Court Ruling On Vaccine Mandate
> Nannina Angioni is a labor and employment attorney and partner of the Los Angeles-based law firm Kaedian. She said that, “We will have a final ruling —likely from the U.S. Supreme Court—about Biden’s vaccine mandate, which will affect business operations nationwide.
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> “Businesses will also continue to grapple with local masking and vaccine requirements, including [sometimes having] difficult conversations with their clients and customers,” she said.

Harder To Recruit And Keep Employees
Suky Sodhi is the president of staffing agency Professional Selection. “I believe talent is going to be more difficult to attract and retain,” she predicted. “Larger companies need to be prepared for mass exits which is going to impact their businesses, as those who refuse to get the vaccine are forced to seek alternative employment opportunities.

“This is also a great opportunity for companies to look at remote set-ups for existing employees, and international talent for new vacancies, where they can utilize skills outside of their usual reach. Companies need to think carefully about implementing the blanket enforcement without investigating how they can protect society while still respecting their employee’s freedom of choice,” Sodhi counseled.

Erratic Wait Times In Global Supply Chain
Jason Fullmer is the chief operating officer of 3D printer company Formlabs. He that that, “In 2022, the fall out of the Covid-19 pandemic will continue to have an impact on manufacturing and the global supply chain. The long, erratic wait times will not go away anytime soon, especially as more variants emerge and potentially disrupt international travel and shipping routes.

“To account for these disruptions, businesses will prioritize making their supply chain and manufacturing processes more redundant and decentralized in 2022,” he observed.

Increased Liability Risks
Daniel R. Strecker is senior counsel with the Harris Beach law firm. “As the Covid-19 global pandemic persists into 2022, I predict businesses, real estate owners, manufacturers, distributors, and retailers will face continued premises and product liability risks…The situation has become more complex in connection with a patchwork of vaccine mandates, which has put vaccinated and unvaccinated people into close contact.

He said that, “… awareness of potential claims and defenses, and ongoing compliance with state and federal health guidelines, will remain critical to avoid incidents now and lay the groundwork for future defenses should claims nevertheless arise.

“Plaintiffs must do more than prove someone became sick—often they must prove negligence, notice, a product defect, or a breach of warranty, and causation. Depending on the state law that applies, following state and federal guidelines may provide immunity. In others, it constitutes evidence that the defendant was not at fault,” Strecker noted.

Advice For Business Leaders
Keep Calm
Nelson of the Nelson Hardiman law firm, said, “… the best thing business leaders can do is be a source of calm, spreading the message that Covid-19 is going to keep looking more and more like the flu, and the panic is worse than the risk (for the vaccinated).

“Leaders need to find the resources to be empathetic to people who remain overly stressed by Covid-19 and the people who are continuing to put themselves at risk needlessly by forgoing vaccination.”

Monitor Data
Don Silver is the chief operating officer of Boardroom PR. He recommended that, “Businesses have to keep a close eye on the data and advisories from the CDC and others and maintain an open line of communications with their workforce and customers and to have alternative plans to help everyone stay as safe as possible.”

Accept Reality
John Goodman of John Goodman PR said that, “Business[es] that have not already adapted to our Covid world will be forced to change. Flexible work schedules will become commonplace. Companies will enhance their work/family benefits to attract and retain employees.

“And those businesses that remain stuck in the past will continue to lose talent to other companies that offer either hybrid or remote work and better benefits. The bottom line: living in our Covid world is now the new normal. And businesses must come to that reality and pivot or else face the consequences,” he concluded.

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