As scientists who study how viruses evolve, we are often asked about the future of the coronavirus. Will it go away? Get worse? Fade into the background of our lives? Become seasonal like the flu?

Here’s what we know: The virus’s Omicron variant was significantly more infectious and more resistant to vaccines than the original strain that first emerged in Wuhan, China. There’s no reason, at least biologically, that the virus won’t continue to evolve. The coronavirus variants that have emerged thus far sample only a fraction of the genetic space that is most likely available for evolutionary exploration.

How much more transmissible SARS-CoV-2 can become is an open question, but there are limits. Even evolution is constrained: a cheetah can’t evolve to be infinitely fast, and SARS-CoV-2 won’t become infinitely transmissible.

Other viruses have reached plateaus in their ability to spread. Some respiratory viruses such as measles are more contagious than today’s SARS-CoV-2. Others, such as influenza, are generally not as contagious as SARS-CoV-2. We don’t know when this coronavirus will hit its transmissibility plateau, but it will
happen eventually.

This is an excerpt. Read the original post here