

## Avacta's lateral flow becomes another casualty of Omicron



[Elizabeth Cairns](#)

The UK microcap Avacta is a lot more microcap today thanks to Omicron. The company admitted this morning that its AffiDX Sars-Cov-2 antigen test is less able to detect the Omicron variant than other coronavirus strains when patients' viral loads are low. The company's insistence that it is the commercial antibody used in the test that is at fault, rather than its own proprietary Affimer reagent, did not forestall a 30% fall in its share price. Avacta is going to replace the antibody with a better one, but in the meantime it has withdrawn the assay from sale. Avacta is arguably being punished for doing the right thing. The US FDA has suggested that many antigen tests might have reduced ability to detect Omicron, but few diagnostics companies have made statements regarding their tests' sensitivity at low viral loads, much less withdrawn them from sale to improve this. Avacta made this plain, with chief executive Alastair Smith saying it was "essential" that similar Omicron sensitivity studies be performed on all Covid antigen tests and the results made public. Don't hold your breath.

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Evaluate HQ  
[44-\(0\)20-7377-0800](tel:44-020-7377-0800)

Evaluate Americas  
[+1-617-573-9450](tel:+1-617-573-9450)

Evaluate APAC  
[+81-\(0\)80-1164-4754](tel:+81-080-1164-4754)

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