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Bryan Says He Will Be Among First to Take Covid-19 Vaccine in USVI, An Effort Aimed at Encouraging Use

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Maxiene K. Cabo **December 08, 2020**

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The Food and Drug Administration is set to approve a Covid-19 vaccine for use in the United States and its territories this week, and the Bryan administration on Monday sought to reassure Virgin Islanders that the vaccine will be safe for use following rumors making the rounds claiming Virgin Islanders were being used as test subjects.

Speaking during the administration's Covid-19 response update Monday, Dr. Tai Hunte-Ceasars, medical director at the Department of Health, said talk in the community that a vaccine will be given experimentally to Virgin Islanders is entirely baseless and false. "There will be no guinea pig trials in the Virgin Islands. The experiments are done and we were not participants in the clinical trials," she said.

Dr. Hunte-Ceasars cautioned those who publicly denounce vaccinations' safety and efficacy. She said this approach discourages immunization of the people of the Virgin Islands and decreases the chance of the territory developing herd immunity.

"Without the proper knowledge surrounding the vaccine development process, this behavior is irresponsible and will further contribute to the rise in death and long-term complication of Covid-19 and disproportionate rates among people of ethnic minorities," she said.

The rumor first starting making the rounds in the territory early November. To help dispel the erroneous information, the Consortium published an article titled, ["No, Virgin Islanders Will Not be Used as Test Subjects for Coronavirus Vaccines"](#). The story detailed the painstaking process Covid-19 vaccines go through, though on a much shorter timetable than other vaccines, whose timeline is traditionally between 8-10 years.

Dr. Hunte-Ceasars said the Virgin Islands is within the highest category of those most affected by the virus. "The goal of the vaccine is to end that reality today," she said.

Dr. Hunte-Ceasars added, "Vaccinations is one of the top ten public health achievements in the 20th century. Vaccinations have extended the human life span and significantly improved quality of life. She said the development of a Covid-19 vaccine was "the most significant medical countermeasure that has been established thus far."

Dr. Hunte-Ceasars said the decision to become vaccinated against the deadly virus should be made after listening to the facts. She advised individuals to have a discussion with their healthcare provider to determine if there are any medical contradictions for vaccinations. "Educate yourself on the facts and not what is harmfully perpetuated on social media," she said.

Governor Bryan said he will be one of the first individuals to get the vaccine to set an example for the community and keep his family safe.