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Dept. of Health Promotes Antibody Covid-19 Treatments as Infection Rate Doubles in St. Thomas

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The V.I. Dept. of Health on Saturday promoted monoclonal antibody treatments, stating that the drugs are available for individuals infected with Covid-19 who meet the criteria. D.O.H. announced the antibody treatments along with rising infections in St. Thomas, which D.O.H. said had doubled recently.

"As of February 11, there were 101 active Covid-19 cases in the territory and the department reported the twenty-fifth death related to Covid-19 on Wednesday. This illustrates how dire the situation still is in the territory despite serious mitigation efforts and policies set forth by the government," said the department in its release.

D.O.H. said the Food and Drug Administration authorized the emergency use of Bamlanivimab, Casirivimab and Imdevimab, which are monoclonal antibody treatments designed to block viral attachment and entry into human cells. These antibodies neutralize the virus and can potentially treat patients with Covid-19. The antibodies were identified from blood samples taken from some of the first patients who recovered from Covid-19 in the United States.

The treatments are most suitable for treating mild to moderate Covid-19 in adults and in pediatric patients aged 12 and older weighing at least 88 pounds, who are at high risk for progressing to more severe illness or hospitalization, D.O.H. said.

To be considered high risk, patients must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Being significantly obese
- Have chronic kidney disease
- Have diabetes
- Have immunosuppressive disease
- Are currently receiving immunosuppressive treatment
- Are 65 or older
- Are 55 or older and have cardiovascular disease or other respiratory disease
- Are 12-17 and have a heart, lung, or neurological condition or being significantly obese or overweight

The treatments are not appropriate for everyone and have not been authorized for use in patients:

- Who are hospitalized due to COVID-19
- Who require oxygen therapy due to COVID-19
- Who require an increase in baseline oxygen flow rate due to COVID-19 in those on chronic oxygen therapy due to underlying non-COVID-19 related morbidity

“I have been seeing patients in and out of the hospital with COVID-19. Since we have been infusing patients who meet criteria for monoclonal antibody treatment, we have had 100 percent success at preventing progression of symptoms,” said Dr. Tai Hunte-Cesar, infectious diseases specialist at D.O.H. “All the patients report a dramatic improvement in symptoms within 24-48 hours. This is a tremendous resource that is available to prevent severe disease in our vulnerable populations.”

D.O.H. Public Relations Director, Jahnesta Ritter, added, “We should all still be practicing social distancing, washing our hands frequently with soap and warm water, and wearing a mask. Those basic preventive measures are effective, but the Covid-19 vaccines are our strongest weapon against the virus.”