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Mu Variant of Covid-19 Confirmed in USVI

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Ernice Gilbert **September 08, 2021**

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Department of Health Infectious Disease Specialist Dr. Tai Hunte-Cesar confirmed the presence of the Mu variant of Covid-19 in the U.S. Virgin Islands during the Bryan administration's weekly Covid-19 press briefing Tuesday.

According to the Global Initiative on Sharing All Influenza Data (GISAID), the largest database of novel coronavirus genome sequences in the world, as of Sept. 3rd, 2000 cases of the Mu variant had been detected in the U.S., with the most cases being recorded in New York, California, Florida and Texas.

“The Mu variant has a constellation of mutations that indicate potential properties of immune escape,” the World Health Organization said in a statement last week Tuesday. The statement raised concerns that the variant may be more resistant to vaccines compared to other strains. However, the WHO added, “But this needs to be confirmed by further studies.”

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the U.S.'s top infectious disease authority, has stated that there is currently a lack of research with people infected with the Mu variant to determine how contagious it is or how virulent. Even so, Dr. Fauci stated that laboratory data had shown that the strain can evade certain antibodies, including those induced through vaccines.

Dr. Tai Hunte-Cesar said Tuesday that the Delta variant continues to be the most prevalent Covid strain in the USVI. "It accounts for 91 percent of cases sequenced at the close of August within the territory and 99 percent nationwide," she said.

She also revealed that 19 people in the territory died of causes related to Covid-19 in August, "by far our deadliest monthly total that brought us to 56." Dr. Hunte-Cesar said 7 people died from Covid-related causes in July.

As of Monday there were 193 active cases territory-wide, with St. Croix accounting for most cases with 120, followed by St. Thomas with 68 and St. John with 5.