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V.I. Resident Fully Vaccinated Against Covid-19 Dies of Covid-Related Complications, the First Such Breakthrough Case in Territory

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The V.I. Department of Health on Monday announced that a USVI resident who was fully vaccinated against Covid-19 died of complications related to the virus last week, the first such breakthrough case in the territory.

The Covid death of a fully vaccinated, hospitalized resident was announced by Territorial Epidemiologist Dr. Esther Ellis. The death occurred last week, according to Dr. Ellis. She did not say which island or whether the victim had underlying conditions, citing HIPAA law.

"This is a reminder that the vaccine was developed to lower the risk of transmission and to lower the risk of hospitalization and death, which is what it does," Dr. Ellis stated. She encouraged

residents who have taken only one dose of either the Pfizer or Moderna Covid-19 vaccines to get the second shot, stating that persons who are not fully vaccinated are “significantly less protected with partial vaccination.”

On Friday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published research that found that people who are not vaccinated against Covid-19 were 4.6 times likelier to get infected, 10 times more likely to be hospitalized, and 11 times more likely to die from the virus.

The results are from three CDC studies conducted as the Delta variant became the dominant strain of the virus in the country. In the studies, the CDC examined outcomes among patients who visited medical facilities' urgent care departments, emergency rooms as well as veterans' hospitals.

Patients in five Veterans Affairs Medical Centers were tracked between Feb. 1 through Aug. 6 in one study. Another study followed 600,000 positive cases in 13 states and large cities during the spring and summer times. The third study followed 33,000 Covid-19 patients in nine states who visited hospitals, emergency departments and urgent care centers.

CDC Director Rochelle Walensky said during a press briefing, “We are seeing more people in the hospital who have been vaccinated, but I want to reiterate that it’s still well over 90 percent of the people who are in the hospital who are unvaccinated.”

The study that tracked the five VA Medical Centers found that mRNA vaccines were 87 percent effective at preventing Covid-19 linked to hospitalization (this includes during the Delta surge). Effectiveness for patients over 65 years old dropped to 80 percent, the study also found. For younger patients, the vaccines were 95 percent effective.

The study tracking the 600,000 cases during spring and summer found that there was a slight decline in vaccine effectiveness beginning mid-June, around the time the Delta variant became the dominant Covid strain in the U.S.

The study that tracked the 33,000 Covid patients found that the vaccines’ protection against hospitalization held at 86 percent in the Delta period, which was close in comparison to periods preceding Delta's dominance. Even so, vaccine effectiveness in persons above 75 years old waned, according to the study.

The Biden administration points to the growing body of data suggesting that vaccination remains the best way to not only protect against the virus, but to usher the U.S. back to normalcy. Mr. Biden on Thursday announced [sweeping requirements](#) that include mandatory vaccination for federal employees, and mandatory vaccination or weekly Covid-19 testing at private firms with more than 100 employees. Those who flout the order could face up to \$14,000 in fines per violation.