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World Health Organization Declares Monkeypox a Global Health Emergency; Dept. of Health Has 100 Doses of Vaccine Ready if Virus Appears in USVI

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With over 16,000 confirmed cases of Monkeypox globally, the World Health Organization on Saturday declared the virus a global public-health emergency of international concern.

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the WHO's director-general, said the emergency committee believes the Monkeypox risk is moderate, except in Europe, where the WHO has concluded, based on data, that the risk is high.

Today's declaration is the first time the WHO has declared a global public health emergency since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

The disease, which in the past was rarely seen outside Africa, has in recent weeks spread to dozens of countries — reaching over 16,000 cases around the world, affecting mainly men who have sex with men. Five people have died in Africa from Monkeypox-related complications this year, however no deaths have been reported outside the continent.

“We have an outbreak that has spread around the world rapidly through new modes of transmission, about which we understand too little and which meets the criteria in the International Health Regulations,” stated Dr. Tedros.

V.I. Dept. of Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion told the Consortium Saturday that health officials, including herself and D.O.H. Medical Director Dr. Tai Hunte-Caesar, have been in contact with the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Region 2.

“We’re very much involved in the situation. We do have 100 doses of the vaccine throughout the territory,” Ms. Encarnacion said, confirming the territory’s preparedness efforts in anticipation of the disease’s arrival in the USVI, though no cases have been detected.

She said the Monkeypox vaccine isn’t administered before detection but rather after an individual has been confirmed to be a positive case.

Should an individual believe they are ill with Monkeypox, this person should make contact with either D.O.H. or their health provider. The health provider would in turn reach out to D.O.H. which would then treat the individual. “We are prepared to treat,” the health commissioner assured.

The main reason for declaring the global public-health emergency of international concern is to mobilize resources to contain Monkeypox, said the Wall Street Journal, citing health experts. The move also gives the WHO authority to make non-binding recommendations to governments around the world.

According to [WSJ](#), the virus, which requires close contact to spread, is likely exploiting close-knit social and sexual networks among men who have sex with men.