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No Cases of Monkeypox in USVI, Dept. of Health Confirms

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A Bavarian Nordic A/S laboratory near Munich.

=Local speculation about cases of monkeypox in the territory may have arisen out of a misunderstanding over what was said by Territorial Epidemiologist Dr. Esther Ellis during a government press briefing on Monday.

After receiving multiple messages from concerned citizens, Consortium journalists reached out to Dr. Ellis, and she clarified the territory's current position.

“What I did say is that there had been eight suspected cases so far (of monkeypox). We actually get a sample any time there's a suspect case — suspected cases are based on symptoms, and the symptoms can be very similar to other viruses for example chicken pox — and so a case becomes a suspect case once a sample is swabbed, and all eight of the swabs came back negative. It's not

monkeypox," she said.

At the press briefing, Dr. Ellis did say that eight samples had been tested thus far, but that there were zero confirmed cases of monkeypox in the territory. Since Monday, the territorial epidemiologist disclosed that two additional suspected cases had been swabbed and those samples were pending the results of laboratory testing.

Dr. Ellis noted that having patients presenting with suspicious symptoms being flagged, swabbed and tested for monkeypox is part of the effective functioning of an epidemiological surveillance system for infectious diseases that could pose a public health threat.

The territorial epidemiologist did say that monkeypox could eventually arrive to the USVI, pointing to Puerto Rico which has over 60 confirmed cases. "There's 66 cases in Puerto Rico out of a population of about 3 million, so it probably will come here but it's not here yet as far as we know," she said.

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