



PR#404

PRESS RELEASE

COVID-19 Variants of Concern Identified

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The Ministry of Health & Wellness through its partnership with Baylor College of Medicine has detected variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in Belize.

From a total of 81 persons diagnosed COVID-19 positive for whom SARS-CoV-2 sequencing was done, these are the findings. Sixty-one or 75.31% of the samples tested negative for any of the variants of concern (VOC) or variants of interest but 20 or 24.69% of the samples tested positive for variants of SARS-CoV-2.

These variants identified are as follows:

Three resulted positive for the EPSILON variant (Not a VOC or interest)

Five resulted positive for the Alpha V1 variant (VOC)

Nine resulted positive for the Delta variant (VOC)

Three resulted positive for the Gamma V3 (VOC)

SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern refers to the genetic changes of the original virus that may cause significant community transmission or multiple clusters with significant increase in the clinical presentation of the disease. The variants identified so far are from residents of the Corozal, Orange Walk, Belize and Cayo districts.

The Ministry of Health & Wellness surveillance teams continue the hard work of contact tracing. Persons who are diagnosed COVID-19 positive must strictly comply with isolation or quarantine measures. They are advised to collaborate with the surveillance team, provide all necessary data for contact tracing, and get tested if they believe they have been exposed or are presenting symptoms related to the disease.

The Ministry of Health & Wellness urges the public to get vaccinated, adhere to physical distancing measures, wear a face mask properly while in public and wash and sanitize hands often. Vaccinated persons are less likely to get infected and spread the disease, and if infected, they are less likely to present severe illness or to be hospitalized due to COVID-19.

Ends