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Hawai'i Department of Health laboratory detects community spread of Delta variant

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i Department of Health's State Laboratories Division (SLD) confirms the SARS-CoV-2 variant B.1.617.2, also known as the Delta variant of concern, is spreading in the state.

To date there have been three cases of the Delta variant associated with travel from the continental United States. Two of those cases are on O'ahu and one is on Hawai'i Island. In addition, the State Laboratories Division has identified the Delta variant in a specimen from an O'ahu resident with no history of travel. The Department of Health is investigating to determine the extent of household and community transmission.

All the persons with COVID-19 caused by the Delta variant have been symptomatic; none have been hospitalized. Only one of the four persons was fully vaccinated for COVID-19. In the three travel-related cases, all household members and close contacts who were fully vaccinated for COVID-19 have tested negative.

"A recently published [study](#) from Scotland found that the risk of COVID-19 hospital admission was approximately double in those with the Delta variant when compared to those with the B.1.1.7 strain, also known as the U.K. or Alpha variant," said State Laboratories Division Administrator Edward Desmond.

The Delta variant, which was first detected in India, now makes up approximately 10% of all cases in the U.S. The Delta variant could soon become the dominant strain of SARS-CoV-2 in the nation according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

"Given what we know about the Delta variant and the cases already identified in Hawai'i, we expect to detect additional cases in the coming weeks," said Dr. Sarah Kemble, the acting State

Epidemiologist. “Our best defense against of the variants is to get vaccinated as soon as possible.”

The COVID-19 vaccines authorized for use in the U.S. are effective against COVID-19 variants currently spreading in the nation.

The State Laboratories Division began genome sequencing of SARS-CoV-2 in June 2020. It now examines 50 to 100 specimens a week and has developed a testing algorithm designed to find variants in a timely manner.

Information on where to get vaccinated is available at <https://hawaiicovid19.com/vaccine>.

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