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PRESS RELEASE

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An increase in Covid-19 cases and hospitalization related to circulation of Variant of Concern (VOC) Delta in the Eastern Caribbean Countries

Bridgetown, Barbados - August 9, 2021 (PAHO) -The Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) Office for Barbados and Eastern Caribbean Countries is advising the public and health authorities to continue to take appropriate and urgent public health and social measures (PHSM) to safeguard lives due to an increase in cases and hospitalization related to circulation of SARS-CoV-2 Variant of Concern (VOC) Delta in the Eastern Caribbean.

It is observed and reported from several countries the emergence of VOC Delta including from Member States in the Americas with high vaccination coverage. With the VOC Delta exhorts the importance of the preparatory process for the expansion of care capacity in the face of the potential increase in Covid-19 cases, hospitalizations, and death. In June and July 2021, Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent, Saint Kitt and Nevis, Virgin Islands-UK, Anguilla, Grenada, Dominica, Monserrat including Barbados have shown a steady increase and surge.

It is necessary to maximize efforts to extend full Covid-19 vaccination coverage, especially in high-risks population, health and care workers, as well as to reinforce non-pharmacological prevention and protection measures, such as physical distancing, the use of individual face masks, the use of antiseptic solutions (i.e., soap and water, alcohol-gel, and liquid alcohol in disinfectant concentration, etc.). These measures continue to be effective in reducing transmission of this and all variants.

The capacity of mobilization of specialized care does not only go through the purchase of equipment, it is also necessary to remember the mobilization or remobilization of teams of health professionals who are trained, and that the services pay attention to the establishment of logistics, flow, use of technologies for provision of care, in addition to the purchase, supply, and monitoring of the use of personal protection equipment, stocks of medicines, medications used in Intensive Care Units (ICUs), and hospital oxygen. Moreover, the processes of preventive maintenance and repair of equipment and the management of hospital waste must be implemented.

“As unvaccinated adults constitute a large percentage (95%) of the Covid-19 case load in each country, vaccination coverage in those persons and families affected by the outbreak have been below optimal,” said Dr. Yitades Gebre, PAHO/WHO Representative for Barbados and Eastern Caribbean Countries.

- PAHO seeks to warn the public as unvaccinated persons are the main source of infection to the larger community, individuals if offered to be vaccinated to take up the offer and get vaccinated.
- Unvaccinated health and care workers to be vaccinated without any further delay to protect themselves and the community they are serving.
- The decision to introduce, adapt or lift PHSM should be based primarily on a situational assessment of the intensity of transmission and the capacity of the health system to respond, but must also be considered in light of the effects these measures may have on the general welfare of society and individuals.
- Public health and social measures continue to work against the variant and that the vaccines are safe and effective against severe illness and death.

PAHO will continue to provide Covid-19 test kits, personal protective devices, medicines, and personnel to support laboratory and surveillance services to identify new infections in each country. We strongly advise that collective action is required to prevent the loss of lives and livelihood. PAHO also thank countries who are recently sharing vaccine doses to Eastern Caribbean Countries and Barbados by ensuring equal access to Covid-19 vaccines.