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TO: Grant County healthcare providers, infection control staff, supervisory nursing staff, clinic management, school nurses.
Grant County Emergency Management
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First SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) Variants Confirmed in Grant County; B.1.429 Variants Detected in Three Individuals

Grant County, WA – Grant County Health District is confirming three instances of B.1.429 variant of SARS-CoV-2 detected in Grant County residents. The variants, often referred to as “California variants”, were identified in the first and second week of April 2021 through genomic sequencing at the WA DOH Public Health Laboratory. Samples were obtained from three Grant County residents who tested positive for COVID-19 in late March and early April. Other details about the individuals are being withheld for confidentiality reasons; all are recovering without requiring hospitalization.

“Variants of SARS-CoV-2 virus which causes COVID-19 are now widespread throughout Washington state, including the California and the B.1.1.7. (UK) strains. In fact, most cases of COVID-19 in Washington are now caused by COVID variants. GCHD continues to closely monitor for variant types and their activity in Grant County. Most COVID variants are more infectious, and their severity is greater, so I want to reiterate the importance of following COVID-safe practices. Because our COVID-19 rate is still high, please continue using high quality masks when in public, physically distance by 6 feet, wash your hands often and stay fit by exercising regularly,” said Dr. Brzezny, Grant County Health Officer. “The next best thing you can do is to get the COVID-19 shot as soon as possible to bring COVID-19 rates down and bring our freedom back. The vaccines are the most hopeful thing we have had since the beginning of this pandemic, so let’s fight back with it.”

Washington State has a robust surveillance system for identifying variants. According to the Washington State Department of Health, Washington is one of the top states for genome sequencing, the process for identifying variants, and our public health laboratory sequences more specimens than nearly any other state in the U.S. In addition to testing for variants among individuals with COVID, the Department of Health is also interested in testing for variants in those rare instances when a person develops COVID after being fully vaccinated (a vaccine breakthrough).

“COVID-19 is not over; this pandemic is not over. We urge everyone to follow preventative measures and take precautions when gathering outside of your home,” said Theresa Adkinson, Grant County Health District Administrator.

“Overall, COVID-19 case rates and community spread in Grant County continue to be relatively high. The concern about COVID variants is a good reason to continue infection prevention steps so that our county can stay in the current phase 3 of reopening. Increasing rates of disease could push us back a phase or worse. Even after a person is vaccinated for COVID-19, individuals should continue wearing a mask in public, using good ventilation at home, school or a workplace, practice regular handwashing and maintain physical distance from others outside of their household. We may have also forgotten that it is still important to get tested and stay home if we feel ill, so please get tested if and isolate if experiencing COVID symptoms,” added Dr. Brzezny.

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