

For Immediate Release
April 2, 2021

South African Variant identified in Finney County

TOPEKA – A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Emerging Variant known as the South African variant has been identified in Kansas. An individual Finney County was found to have the B.1.351 variant. A case investigation is being conducted to determine how the person became infected with this particular variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, as well as if others may have been exposed. No further details are being released concerning the patient, including demographics.

The variant was determined through the whole genome sequencing conducted through the laboratories at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE).

The B.1.351 variant was originally identified in South Africa in December and has been [found in 31 states and territories](#) in the U.S. At this point, it is not known to cause more severe disease and it is not clear whether it spreads more readily than other strains. Although this strain can reduce the effectiveness of some vaccines, vaccines still provide strong protection against severe illness and death.

“We continue to encourage people to take the appropriate precautions. This includes wearing a mask that fits snugly around the nose and face and has multiple layers of fabric or layering thinner masks with an additional cloth face mask to improve the fit,” Dr. Lee Norman, KDHE Secretary, said. “Kansans should also follow isolation and quarantine recommendations, practice physical distancing, good hygiene, staying home if ill and getting the vaccine if you are able to.”

Another variant of concern, B.1.1.7, also known as the UK variant, has previously been identified in Kansas. There are currently 76 cases identified in 14 counties. This variant was first reported in the U.S. at the end of December 2020. Evidence from the UK indicates that this variant spreads much more quickly through the population and, given that fact, may rapidly increase the number of hospitalizations and deaths. More studies are needed to confirm this finding.

Testing is available and free for all Kansans. To find a location near you, visit:
www.gogettested.com/kansas.

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