

# MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

February 26, 2021

## COVID-19 Variant of Concern (VOC) found in Northwestern Health Unit area

Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) has received its first reported COVID-19 Variant of Concern (VOC) lab result. The UK variant was found in a case in the Dryden area and is not known to be linked to the recent increase of cases in the Kenora area.

“The presence of a VOC in our area emphasizes the importance of prevention measures. Stay 2 metres from anyone you do not live with, wear a mask, practise good hand hygiene, and limit the number of people you socialize with,” says Dr. Kit Young Hoon, Medical Officer of Health at NWHU. “This should not be cause for panic, but it is a wake-up call to all residents to take prevention measures seriously. The threat of COVID-19 in our area is very real,” Dr. Young Hoon emphasizes.

“VOCs are known to spread much faster than non-variant COVID-19. When a virus spreads within a day or two, instead of a week or two, many people can become infected and further spread the virus quickly. This means it is more likely that someone will be severely ill simply because so many more people are impacted. Also, there is some evidence that this variant can increase the risk of death,” explains Dr. Young Hoon.

NWHU notes that all positive lab results are sent to a Public Health Lab to be examined for variants. This case was previously reported by NWHU and followed all isolation measures.

To stay safe, NWHU urges the public to stay at least 2 metres away from anyone you do not live with, including relatives. If anyone has any virus symptoms, including flu or cold-like symptoms, immediately self-isolate away from household members, and get tested for COVID-19.

-30-

### **Media Contact:**

Dr. Kit Young Hoon  
Medical Officer of Health  
Northwestern Health Unit  
[jbegg@nwhu.on.ca](mailto:jbegg@nwhu.on.ca)

*A reminder to the media that Dr. Kit Young Hoon hosts online COVID-19 media briefings every Tuesday, 1:30 pm CT and Friday, 10:00 am CT as well as Q&A sessions for the public every second Thursday, 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm CT. If you do not have a link to the media briefings, please email [jbegg@nwhu.on.ca](mailto:jbegg@nwhu.on.ca).*