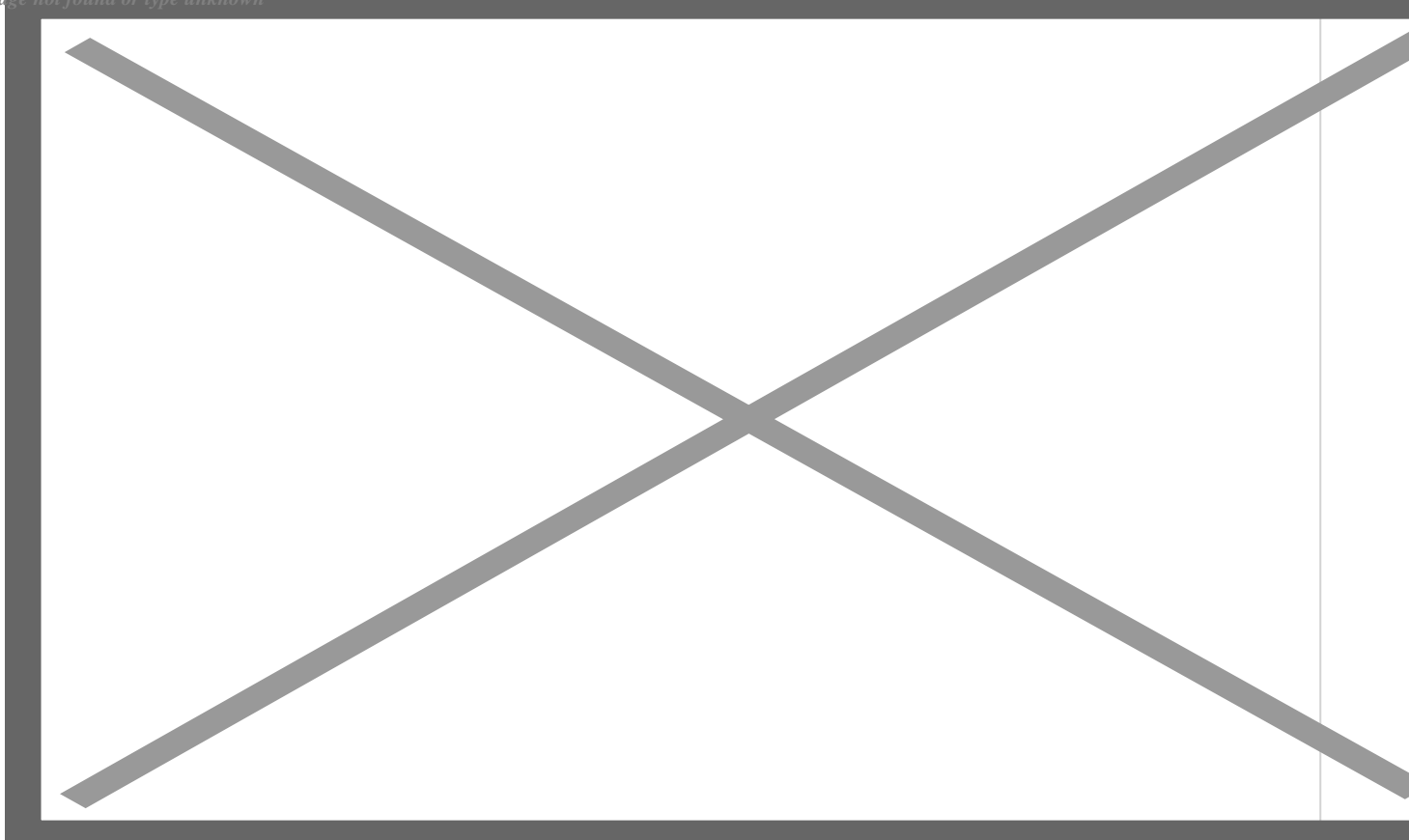


# *U.S. health official cites near vertical rise in COVID*

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**The United States is experiencing “almost a vertical increase” in COVID cases as the Omicron variant sweeps the country, but the peak may be only weeks away, top U.S. pandemic advisor Anthony Fauci said.**

Washington, January 2 (RHC)-- The United States is experiencing “almost a vertical increase” in COVID cases as the Omicron variant sweeps the country, but the peak may be only weeks away, top U.S. pandemic advisor Anthony Fauci said.

“We are definitely in the middle of a very severe surge and uptick in cases,” Fauci said on ABC’s “This Week,” calling the soaring infection rate “really unprecedented.” With the Omicron variant of the virus sweeping around the world, more than 440,000 new cases were reported in the United States on Friday.

Dr. Fauci said there was still a danger of a surge in hospitalization due to a large number of coronavirus cases even as early data suggests the Omicron COVID-19 variant is less severe. “The only difficulty is that if you have so many many cases, even if the rate of hospitalization is lower with Omicron than it is with Delta, there is still the danger that you will have a surging of hospitalisations that might stress the healthcare system,” Fauci said in an interview with CNN.

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