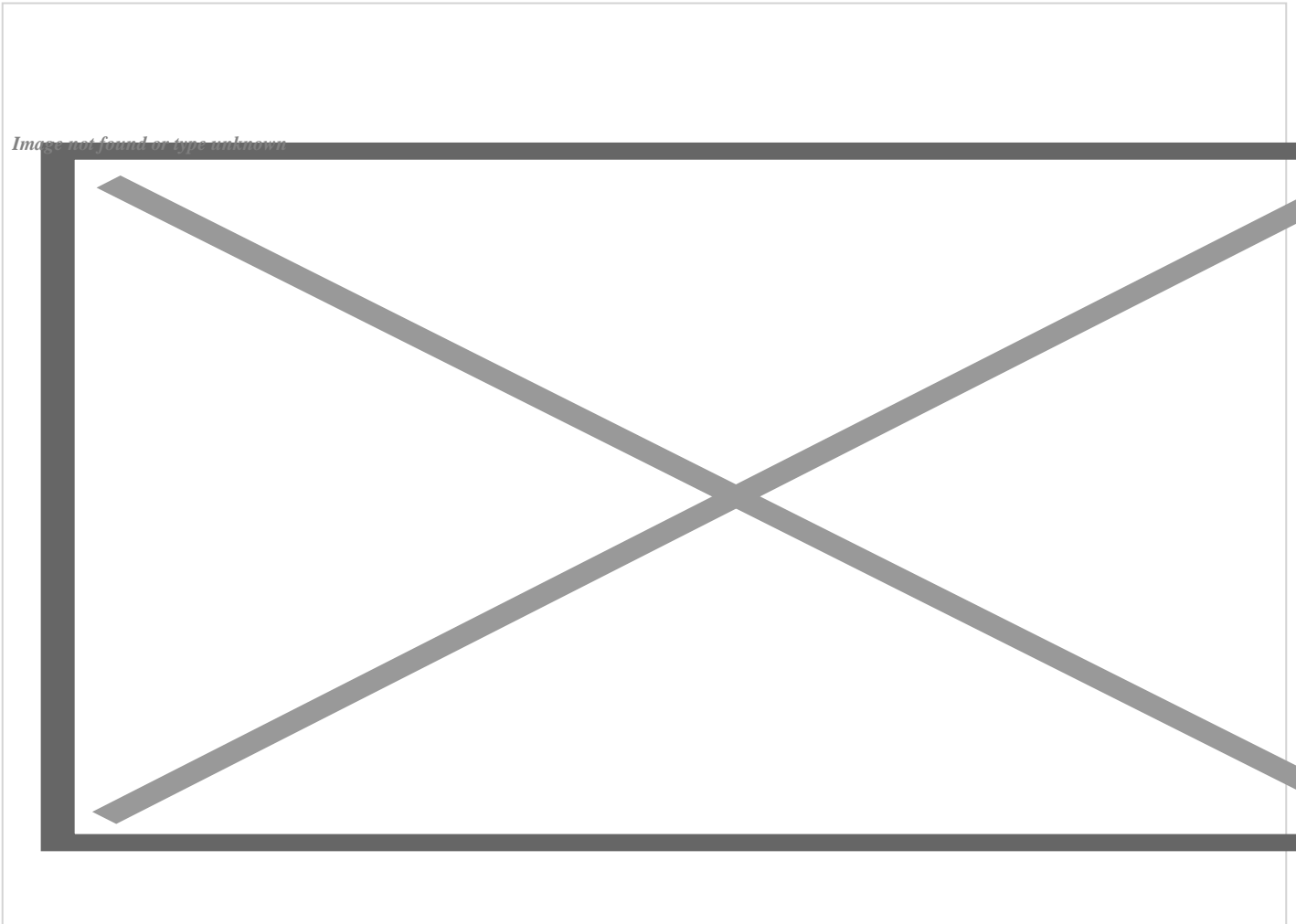


COVID-19 cases in U.S. 30 times higher than reported



Washington, June 4 (RHC)-- The United States finds itself in the throes of the fourth wave of coronavirus, according to the official case count, albeit experts say the actual current rate could be 30 times higher than reported.

About 94,000 people in the world's worst-hit country are contracting the virus every day, and hospitalizations have also surged this month, but officials insist the rate is lower than in previous waves.

A new survey of the surge in New York, cited in a Guardian report on Thursday, suggests that the virus cases could be undercounted by a factor of 30.

"It would appear official case counts are under-estimating the true burden of infection by about 30-fold, which is a huge surprise," Denis Nash, an author of the study and a professor of epidemiology at the City University of New York School of Public Health, is quoted as saying in the report.

According to the study, which has not been peer-reviewed or published, at least 1 in 5 people in New York had COVID-19 between April 23 and May 8, constituting about 22 percent of the city's population. This means that more than 1.5 million people in the city have been infected with coronavirus in just two weeks, which is more than the official figure, the study finds.

While it is focused on New York, the findings may be true throughout the rest of the country, Nash said, adding that undercounting could be even worse elsewhere. "It's very worrisome. To me, it means that our ability to really understand and get ahead of the virus is undermined," Nash said.

This week marks the eighth consecutive week of a surge in COVID-19 cases in the United States. In recent weeks, confirmed daily US cases have been rising again, powered by a rising tide of Omicron sub-variants currently circulating the country.

The milestone comes more than 13 months into a vaccination drive that has been confounded by misinformation, political and legal strife, and vaccine hesitancy in segments of the population. It also marks the seventh consecutive week that child COVID-19 cases have been increasing in the country, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Children's Hospital Association.

More than 112,000 child COVID-19 cases were reported in the United States during the past week, a doubling of case counts from the four weeks before that. The daily COVID-19 death count is also increasing. More than 500 COVID-19 deaths were reported nationwide on Wednesday, sending shockwaves across the country.

Amid a rise in infections, a growing list of school districts and universities are now moving to bring back mask requirements. "This idea that we need to return to normal and that's the most important thing, rather than just actually using mitigation measures to save lives – it's not that hard, and if it were normalized, we could do it," Lara Jirmanus, a family physician and clinical instructor at Harvard Medical School, is cited in the report.

"To just decide that it's perfectly fine for everyone to be infected three to four times a year in the future with a new virus whose effects we don't fully understand is a huge, huge gamble," she continued. "We just don't know what Covid could lead to in the future... We're playing with fire."

Reports citing medical experts say the most dominant form of COVID-19 currently spreading in the U.S. appears to spread faster than earlier variants and is believed to be a mutation genetically linked to both the Omicron and Delta versions of COVID-19.

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