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Alert on the Increase of COVID-19 Cases in Puerto Rico after surpassing 225 thousand molecular tests [1]

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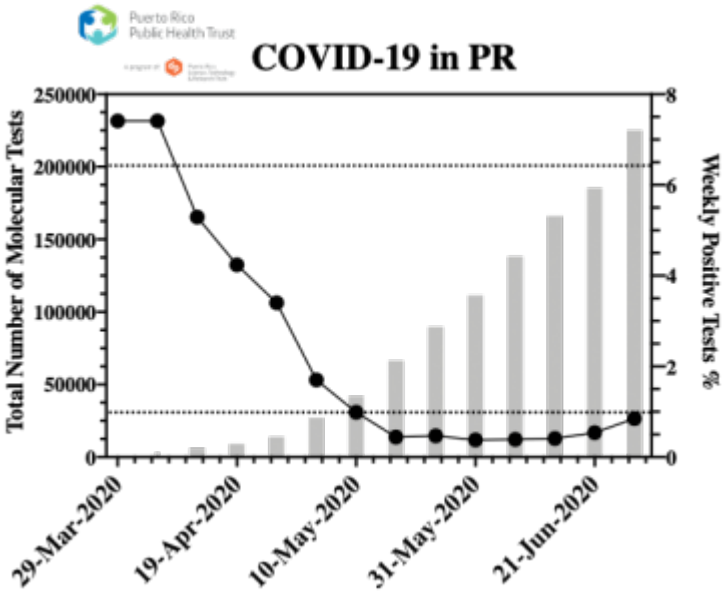
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By:

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Gráfica que indica el número de pruebas de PCR para detectar COVID-19 hechas por semana y el porcentaje de esas pruebas que ha dado positivo.

After accomplishing more than 225,000 thousand molecular tests by private reference laboratories on the Island; The Puerto Rico Public Health Trust (PRPHT), a program of the Puerto Rico Science, Technology and Research Trust (PRSTRT) along with the Department of Health of

Puerto Rico, warn of the reflected increase in positive cases of COVID-19 in the last two weeks.

"We are satisfied with the capacity that private reference laboratories are carrying out with molecular tests, but we also remain vigilant in the face of the possible increase in infections after the opening of the economy and the airport," said Dr. José F. Rodríguez Orengo, Executive Director of the PRPHT. "People have a false perception that the virus has been eliminated and what is increasingly observed is the lack of the use of a mask and the elimination of physical distance," he said.

According to data from the reference laboratory consortium, since the beginning of May a weekly incidence of positive cases of less than 1% (less than 100 positive cases per week) had been maintained, which represents one of the lowest numbers within the United States jurisdictions. However, in the last two weeks, there has been a considerable increase in the number of infected persons (about 200 cases) and, if the trend continues, the infection curve could reverse the prevention efforts implemented with great effectiveness by the Puerto Rican community.

For his part, the secretary of the Puerto Rico Department of Health, Dr. Lorenzo González stated: “The main sources of infection in the past two weeks have been found by Puerto Ricans of the diaspora who have come to visit their relatives. Also, Puerto Ricans have left the Island (Ciales, Canóvanas, Guayanilla, Hatillo); and upon returning, have infected their family nucleus and friends.”

"Our Achilles heel at present is the entry into Puerto Rico of infected travelers, so it is necessary to do mandatory molecular tests and trace contacts to family members who visit us to avoid contagion in our communities," said Dr. Rodríguez Orengo.

The PRPHT, as one of the main health organizations in the country, emphasizes 2 essential points to limit the increase of infected people in Puerto Rico. The first is to take concrete actions at the Luis Muñoz Marín airport in relation to travelers, and the second is to resume basic precautionary measures.

The second important aspect is to keep watch over our daily activities to avoid community contagion. In order to make people identify with these activities, we have called them the **health trilogy**, which consists of: (1) hand washing for a minimum of 20 seconds, (2) the correct use of the mask, and (3) the physical distance of at least 6 feet away.

The Secretary explained that “we are facing a new reality in which we can take two paths, the first: forget about the sacrifice we have made so far and return to having hundreds or thousands of people infected with COVID-19 in Puerto Rico; or maintain our social responsibility to continue the trend of few infections on the Island. The decision is up to all of us and I hope we can grow as a country, "he stressed.

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