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Meeting	Wekelijkse TC COVID-19 en de Caribische regio																								
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1. Update on the current situation on the islands

Sint Maarten: Cases are between 150-200 a day. We see a sharp drop in the number of reported cases. Positivity has dropped as well, we're trending around 28% now. Surveillance indicates about 94% Omicron. Public health infrastructure is still kind of a mess here. If we get through the next two weeks, we should be in a better place.

Saba: We currently have 24 active cases. We see a decrease in our daily cases, which is giving us a bit of breathing space. We don't have anyone who had to be hospitalized. Schools also opened again. We received a large shipment of self-tests and our freezer arrived as well. We had the time to train some staff to deal with the turnover. All in all, this has been a better week.

Statia: We have more cases on a daily base (less than 10 though). A lot of people do self-tests, and schools received self-tests as well (public health/OCW advises in this). Daily testing amounts to about 30-50 per day. We currently have two patients admitted to the hospital (both unvaccinated). We're still waiting for the sequencing results, and at this moment we have 65 active cases. If we look at the figures, we have more non-vaccinated people that are being tested positive. We haven't received the freezer yet. Hopefully we'll receive the vaccines for children in the first week of February.

Bonaire: The number of people getting tests is lower, which means our case load is also a bit lower. We expect cases will be somewhere between 700-850 this week. The positivity rate is still the same and even a little bit higher than last week. People should be careful. In the hospital we now have 10 cases – which is a slight increase, but expected due to the delay in number of cases and hospital admissions. Measures were frustrating last week; we advised stronger measures, but the government decided differently – there is no capacity to implement them, at least not fast enough, and it's also due to economic reasons. Current measures are not optimal to break

transmission. Source and contact tracing is limited, but we do have enough test capacity, although we don't always have enough people to answer phones at the call center. Daily activity care for the elderly is open again. We're concerned about our healthcare capacity, but it's not a crisis.

Curacao: The graph makes it look like we're in the downslope, but daily numbers are still around 400-500. Self-tests are now allowed on the island, but we don't know how many positive tests get reported to us. Numbers are still relatively high on a daily basis. The younger group is not adding on too much. The R reflects what we're seeing, it's currently under 1 – which indicates it should get better.

Policies on the island changed as well: we moved quarantine from 14 to 10 days. We were constantly looking for theoretical underpinning, as the data was based on the incubation period, but the generation time shows to be between 4.6 days – around 7, that's the average, so 10 days is a more acceptable risk. The pressure was high due to work circumstances. If a PCR test on day 7 is negative, then the chances you'll still become infected are really low. We also tried to help the government by changing isolation to 5 days, but the policy on the island now is: 10 days quarantine, 10 days isolation (it's different for workers in essential jobs like healthcare and the police). We're still preparing to move away from testing.

Aruba: We had to make some adjustments as well. On Aruba we also see a downward trending curve, but numbers are still high, around 300 new cases per day. The number of cases in children is kind of stable. We saw a big Delta wave. Less people are getting tested, but we do see a drop in positivity rate. Hospital admissions were less than during the Delta wave, as is visible in the graph shown. Most hospital admissions are with COVID, but not due to COVID. During this wave, we do see more vaccinated people in the ICU, but overall, absolute ICU admissions are way less compared to the Delta wave. We've given about 20.000 booster shots right now.

2. Hospitalization and occupancy rates

As the Excel sheet shows, admission rates for ages below 35 years are very low, a bit higher in the unvaccinated groups and it climbs up in the older categories.

The differences in time between testing and hospital admissions: the median is 3 days for Delta, and 1 day for Omicron. The median hospital length of stay is 5.9 days for Delta and 3 for Omicron.

3. Plans of Aruba and Curacao to lift all restrictions and move to post-COVID policy

Especially when looking at hospital admissions, you could say Omicron is less severe in terms of morbidity, but it still poses a problem to hospital personnel/capacity.

For two years we have been doing a lot of testing, but that's not sustainable, especially now with Omicron. A lot depends on the clinical severance of the variant at the moment. Contact tracing works if the numbers are still relatively low.

4. Update COVID-19 IARs Carib

For Saba, the lab transcriptions are finalized. For Statia, we're finalizing the preparations.

5. A.o.b.

- Regarding booster vaccinations, Aruba is stuck. As an incentive, as of Monday you can enter the island if you're vaccinated.

- For Saba/Statia: the analyses of the long-COVID surveillances are ongoing, it would be nice if you could join, because we now have the capacity at RIVM to do the analysis.
- Regarding the cruise ships: in a recent example, 65 people tested positive (PCR), they packed their bags and left again without events.

Closing of the meeting