



Republic of the Philippines
Department of Health
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

MORE LABS IN THE PIPELINE TO START COVID-TESTING, UPDATES ON TEST KITS AND PPE DISTRIBUTION, DISCUSSED DURING DOH PRESSER

Press Release/31 March 2020

The DOH today reported that, with the opening of the Lung Center of the Philippines (LCP) laboratory for COVID-19 testing, it expects an increase in the country's daily testing capacity, once the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) has validated their results.

The news was announced by Health OIC-Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire during the 'Beat COVID-19 Virtual Presser,' a daily news program hosted by PTV-4 to discuss the initiatives and updates of DOH and its partners in combating the COVID-19 pandemic.

Aside from LCP, the DOH is conducting the COVID-19 testing accreditation process of other hospitals and laboratories. Among the 46 government and private hospitals which applied for accreditation, the Bicol Public Health Laboratory in Region V and the Western Visayas Medical Center (WVMC) in Region VI are already in the last stages of the process. St. Luke's Medical Center in Quezon City and Bonifacio Global City are also near-accreditation.

OIC-Usec. Vergeire also clarified the main difference between the recently approved rapid test kits and the PCR tests. The Health official explained that the rapid antibody test kit can only detect the presence of antibodies produced by an individual to fight the virus. Antibodies are produced once a person is already infected, and sometimes, one does not develop antibodies in the early stages of infection. This means that rapid tests do not confirm if a person is truly positive or negative, especially when he/she is asymptomatic.

Meanwhile, the Polymerase Chain Reaction or PCR tests detects the actual presence of the virus. it determines if an individual is positive with the virus even when he/she is asymptomatic. Hence, it is the gold standard in testing for COVID-19.

The clarification comes after five kinds of rapid test kits were approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) yesterday. OIC-Usec. Vergeire explained that patients who take rapid tests still need to undergo a confirmatory test using the PCR tests.

During the presser, the DOH also gave an update on the delivery of test kits to the five subnational laboratories and three other laboratories, namely the University of the Philippines - National Institutes of Health, WVMC and Bicol Public Health Laboratory. The test kits delivered to these laboratories can perform 40,700 tests each.

It was also reported that 50,000 PCR test kits donated by the Manny Pacquiao Foundation were already delivered to San Lazaro Hospital and the Philippine General Hospital.

On the distribution of personal protective equipment or PPEs, Usec. Vergeire said that the DOH delivered various PPEs just yesterday to the following:

1. The Philippine Orthopedic Center,
2. East Avenue Medical Center,
3. Dr. Jose N. Rodriguez Memorial Hospital,
4. Divine Grace Medical Center (Rosario, Cavite),
5. Philippine Oncology Center Corporation (Fairview, Quezon City),
6. Gat Andres Bonifacio Memorial Medical Center (Tondo, Manila),
7. Mariano Marcos Memorial Hospital & Medical Center (Ilocos Norte),
8. Medical Center Paranaque,
9. Pasig Doctors Medical Center,
10. Metropolitan Doctors Association,
11. St. Benedict Dialysis Center,
12. Philippine General Hospital,
13. LCP, and
14. St. Camillus Medical Center Pasig.

It was announced that the DOH has also procured additional PPEs. The first batch of 200,000 PPEs is expected to arrive between April 1 to 6, while the second batch of 700,000 PPEs should arrive between April 6 to 24. These PPE sets will be delivered to the Office of the Civil Defense (OCD), who will assist in bringing these supplies to the different COVID-19 referral hospitals and to other regions outside of Metro Manila.

Towards the latter half of the presser, the Health OIC-Undersecretary thanked the Philippine National Police (PNP) for its full support to health workers after PNP Chief General Archie Gamboa released a directive today instructing their members who are manning checkpoints to give the appropriate assistance and support to our health workers. The directive was given in the light of recent reports of health workers being victims of discrimination and harassment on their way to and from work.

The DOH strongly condemns violence made against all health workers and reiterates the need to give them the utmost respect and consideration, given their sacrifice and hard work towards the country's fight against COVID-19.