



Republic of the Philippines
Department of Health
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

August 03, 2020

DEPARTMENT MEMORANDUM

No. 2020- 0376

TO: BANGSAMORO AUTONOMOUS REGION IN MUSLIM MINDANAO (BARMM) MINISTER OF HEALTH, ALL DIRECTORS OF CENTERS FOR HEALTH DEVELOPMENT (CHD), CHIEFS OF MEDICAL CENTERS AND HOSPITALS, AND OTHERS CONCERNED

SUBJECT: Prioritization of COVID-19 Testing using Xpert Xpress SARS-CoV-2 Cartridges

I. BACKGROUND

As part of the continuous efforts to increase the national laboratory capacity to detect the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the Department of Health has augmented the use of GeneXpert[®] machines for COVID-19 testing. However with the current limited capacity of the manufacturer to produce enough number of supplies to cope with the increasing worldwide demand, the Department of Health has opted to rationalize the allocation of Xpert[®] Xpress SARS-CoV-2 cartridges nationwide and to ensure that the more vulnerable patients and at-risk individuals are prioritized for access.

II. GENERAL GUIDELINES

The following DOH-Licensed COVID-19 Testing Laboratories are the priority recipients of the Xpert[®] Xpress SARS-CoV-2 cartridges:

1. In affected regions/provinces/cities without access to DOH-licensed COVID-19 testing laboratories with real time Reverse Transcriptase Polymerase Chain Reaction (rRT-PCR) but with access to DOH-licensed COVID-19 testing laboratories with Rapid PCR (GeneXpert).
2. In affected regions/provinces/cities with access to both DOH-licensed COVID-19 testing laboratories with rRT-PCR **and** those with Rapid PCR (GeneXpert), the use of Xpert[®] Xpress SARS-CoV-2 shall be allowed for patients in emergency cases only.

III. SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

As per the Department Memorandum No. 2020-0258-A entitled "Amendment to Department Memorandum No. 2020-0258 entitled Updated Interim Guidelines on Expanded Testing for COVID-19", the cartridges shall be utilized in a more responsible and efficient way, and testing using these cartridges shall be prioritized based on the subgroup classification:

A. For affected regions/provinces/cities without access to rRT-PCR but with access to Rapid PCR (GeneXpert) using Xpert® Xpress SARS-CoV-2 cartridges **only**, the following **subgroups** shall be prioritized for COVID-19 Testing:

1. Subgroup A: Individuals with severe/critical symptoms and relevant history of travel and/or contact;
2. Subgroup B: Individuals with mild symptoms and relevant history of travel and/or contact, and considered vulnerable. Vulnerable populations include those elderly and with preexisting medical conditions that predispose them to severe presentation and complications of COVID-19;
3. Sub-group C: Individuals with mild symptoms, and relevant history of travel and/or contact; and
4. Sub-group F: Other vulnerable patients and those living in confined spaces. These include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Pregnant patients who shall be tested during the peripartum period;
 - ii. Dialysis patients;
 - iii. Patients who are immunocompromised, such as those who have HIV/AIDS, inherited diseases that affect the immune system;
 - iv. Patients undergoing chemotherapy or radiotherapy;
 - v. Patients who will undergo elective surgical procedures with high risk for transmission;
 - vi. Any person who have had organ transplants, or have had bone marrow or stem cell transplant the past 6 months; and
 - vii. Any person who is about to be admitted in enclosed institutions such as jails, penitentiaries, and mental institutions

Individuals falling under (i) to (vi) above shall be tested at the discretion of the attending physician, following the existing guidelines of their respective professional or medical societies. Meanwhile, testing of individuals classified as (vii) above is mandatory prior to admission into the facility.

B. However, for affected regions/provinces/cities with access to both DOH-licensed COVID-19 testing laboratories with rRT-PCR **and** those with Rapid PCR (GeneXpert), the use of Xpert® Xpress SARS-CoV-2 cartridges shall be prioritized for patients with emergency situations or life-threatening conditions to facilitate immediate diagnosis of COVID-19 disease and necessary treatment.

For strict compliance and dissemination to all concerned.


FRANCISCO T. DUQUE III, MD, MSc
Secretary of Health