



WHO to cover 3 vaccines in Phl trials

By RAINIER ALLAN RONDA

The World Health Organization Solidarity Vaccine Trials for candidate COVID-19 vaccines are set to start, with the final SVT protocols and vaccines as well as WHO counterpart funding available this week, Science and Technology Secretary Fortunato dela Peña said yesterday.

Dela Peña said the WHO trials would involve three COVID-19 vaccines as the delay in completion of the final protocol for the SVT was due to the addition of a third vaccine developer.

The DOST chief, however, did not identify the three vaccines that would be studied in the SVT.

Dela Peña announced that the

final protocol would be finished this weekend.

"The World Health Organization or WHO headquarters has already forwarded the Letter of Agreement on June 11, 2021 for review of the Department of Health, Department of Science and Technology and the Philippine Solidarity Vaccine Trial

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team. The fund transfer of the WHO counterpart will be made in favor of the University of the Philippines-Manila and that will be completed next week," Dela Peña said in his Bayanihan report last Friday.

Rowena Cristina Guevara, science and technology undersecretary for research and development and chairperson of the Task Group on Vaccine Evaluation and Selection (TG-VES), said the WHO is expected to provide a counterpart fund support of \$1.5 million in cash and equipment to UP-Manila, which will spearhead the Philippines SVT team.

The Philippine government, for its part, is providing a total funding of P483 million for the vaccine trials in the country.

Guevara said the Department of Budget and Management provided the DOST an additional funding of P384.4 million for the Philippine-WHO SVT, on top of the P89 million funding already earmarked by the DOST. The DOH provided additional P9.6 million funds.

The TG-VES had earlier prepared the SVT team with workshops and seminars on the protection, safety and well-being of participants as well as how adverse events should be recorded and reported during clinical trials.

The training of the Philippines'

SVT team started last January.

Guevara had earlier said that there would be changes in the WHO trial sites, stressing that barangays with high number of COVID-19 cases had changed from January when they first identified the trial sites, to the current barangay hotspots.

However, Guevara said these changes would not affect the timetable of the rollout once they start.

"We are on track," Guevara said.

The DOST, as head of the TG-VES, has partnered with the Department of the Interior and Local Government for the coordination of the national rollout of the trials.