



ALL APPROVED VACCINES 'USEFUL' VS DELTA VARIANT-FDA

DOH REPORTS LOWEST NUMBER OF CASES IN A MONTH

By Patricia Denise M. Chiu
and Leila B. Salaverria
@Team_Inquirer



The Department of Health (DOH) on Tuesday said it recorded 3,666 new COVID-19 cases, raising the total to 1,367,894. It was the lowest daily number reported in nearly a month.

Health authorities also said that all the vaccines being used in the country were still capable of working against the Delta variant of the coronavirus, which was found to be more transmissible than other variants.

Also on Tuesday, the independent OCTA Research group said that new cases in Metro Manila had gone down to just around 700 a day.

The group reported that from June 15 to June 21, the average new COVID-19 cases in the National Capital Region (NCR) fell by 15 percent from 824 the previous week.

Average daily attack

The average daily attack rate in NCR is also down to 5.07 per 100,000 population, it said.

This means Metro Manila, which was the center of the surge in cases in April and May, is now classified as a "moderate-low" risk area, with a reproduction rate of 0.73.

A reproduction number of 1 or higher indicates a sustained transmission of the coronavirus. In the week before Metro Manila and nearby provinces—collectively called NCR Plus—were placed under enhanced community quarantine, the reproduction rate was 1.96.

Areas of concern

However, the group said several cities outside of Metro Manila are still "areas of concern," including Davao, Bacolod, Iloilo, Cagayan de Oro and Tacloban.

The group said the cities of Iloilo, Cagayan de Oro, Tuguegarao, Dasmariñas, Butuan, Tacloban, Roxas and Polomolok had a high hospital bed occupancy rate.

The DOH said Tuesday's new case count was the lowest since May 23 when 3,083 were recorded.

However, the May 23 report was "relatively low" due to the "simultaneous updates" that were made to the COVID Kaya digital information management platform, the DOH said at the time.

No such reason was given on Tuesday, but the DOH said 12 laboratories failed to submit their data on time. Nevertheless, based on data from the last 14 days, the 12 nonreport-

ing labs contributed, on average, only 3 percent of total samples tested and 3.1 percent of positive individuals, which meant that they had not been significantly altering the final count for the day.

According to Tuesday's health department report, 6,810 patients had recovered, which brought the total number of recoveries to 1,291,389. It said 60 more people died, raising the death toll to 23,809.

The recoveries and deaths left 52,696 active cases. Of this number, 91 percent are mild cases, 4.2 percent asymptomatic, 2 percent severe, 1.4 percent critical and 1.4 percent moderate.

The DOH said it removed 11 duplicates from the total case count and 56 cases previously tagged as recoveries were reclassified as deaths following validation.

FDA assurance

As the country continued to combat the coronavirus to keep the numbers down, Dr. Eric Domingo, director general of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), assured the public that all the vaccines deployed in the country were still "useful" against its more transmissible Delta variant even though their efficacy may be lower.

He said that according to data from the United Kingdom, the Pfizer vaccine had an 88-percent efficacy rate against the Delta variant, which was lower than its 93-percent efficacy rate against the Alpha variant.

The Delta variant was first detected in India and the Alpha in the United Kingdom.

The AstraZeneca vaccine's efficacy rate against the Delta variant was 60 percent and 66 percent for the Alpha variant, Domingo said.

Decreasing, but not gone

"So, there's a decreasing efficacy as we get more mutations, but the efficacy of the vaccine is not completely gone," he said in a meeting in Malacañang on Monday.

Studies are ongoing on the efficacy of the vaccines made by Janssen, Moderna, Sinovac, Sinopharm and Gamaleya against the Delta variant.

There were indications they would be effective against the variant as well, Domingo said, adding: "Initial reports indicate that they are also useful, but of course we expect that it will be a little lower than the original efficacy on the original variant. This means all these vaccines won't lose their efficacy completely even with the Delta variant." INQ