



6K NEW INFECTIONS

TRIALS SHOW 3 VAX BRANDS SAFE ALSO FOR MINORS—DOC

COVID-19

Clinical trials conducted on the Sinovac, Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have shown that these brands currently being administered on adults are likely to be safe also for minors, according to a member of the interim National Immunization Task Group for COVID-19.

In terms of efficacy, preliminary results from the Pfizer trial showed that the vaccine gave better protection to people younger than 18, Dr. Mary Ann Bunyi said at the Laging Handa briefing on Thursday.

The Food and Drug Administration recently approved the emergency use of the Pfizer

vaccine for minors age 12 to 15.

Bunyi, who is also a member of the Philippine Pediatric Society and the Pediatric Infectious Disease Society of the Philippines, said she agreed with the government policy to prioritize the older population, among them health-care workers, seniors and adults with comorbidities, given that "our [vaccine] supplies are limited."

NCR as priority

As to reports about young adults age 16 to 26 who have experienced myocarditis, or heart inflammation, after getting Pfizer jabs, Bunyi said the cases need to be studied to confirm if the heart ailment was caused

by the vaccine.

At the same press briefing, Dr. Nicanor Austriaco of the University of Santo Tomas, who advises the government's pandemic task force, said the National Capital Region (NCR) must continue to be prioritized for the country to achieve containment or herd immunity by the end of the year.

"We must build a COVID-proof wall around the NCR. This is the pattern: It starts at the NCR and moves to the provinces. So [if] we vaccinate the NCR, we prevent the virus from traveling to the provinces ... [We'd] be building a wall around the Philippines by vaccinating the NCR Plus 8," Aus-

triaco said. *(See related story in Regions, Page A8)*

But the strategy does not mean excluding the rest of the country, he added, citing government data which showed that 65 percent of the vaccines are allocated to NCR Plus 8, and 35 percent to the rest of the country.

Case updates

Austriaco said Filipinos who lived in rural areas were currently protected from the Delta variant since the carriers, who were returning international travelers, usually passed through the NCR or other urban areas where they were supposed to be detected and isolated, before being allowed to

leave for their home provinces.

The Department of Health on Thursday recorded 6,043 new cases of COVID-19, which brought the total case tally in the country to 1,378,260.

Another 108 deaths have pushed the total death toll to 24,036, while 4,486 recoveries brought the total number of survivors to 1,302,814.

There are still 51,410 active cases, or currently sick individuals, majority or 90.6 percent of whom are mild cases, 4.5 percent asymptomatic, 1.4 percent in critical condition, 2 percent with severe symptoms and 1.44 percent with moderate symptoms. —REPORTS FROM JEROME ANING

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