DOH warns Metro vs complacency

Says Delta variant still a threat

BY GERARD NAVAL

The Department of Health (DOH) yesterday warned National Capital Region residents against being complacent now that the region has been classified as "low risk" from coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

In a radio interview, Health Undersecretary Leopoldo Vega said it would be dangerous for Metro Manila if residents become reckless with their compliance to minimum public health protocols.

"Even though it (COVID-19) is already going down, we cannot say yet that it will already go away. Personally, I think we are not out of the woods yet," said Vega.

"Let us not be caught off guard. Let us not be complacent," he also said.

Vega stressed health protocols should continue to be strictly enforced amid the threat of the Delta variant, which has been categorized as a variant of concern by the World Health Organization.

"Although we don't have it on the local setting, we are closely monitoring it," he said.

The DOH has reported 17 Delta cases in the country, all of which were traced to seafarers and returning overseas Filipinos.

The health official warned that if the people become relaxed, there could be another surge in Metro Manila cases similar to what occurred in March.

"Many factors can cause a surge, such as super spreader events like weddings, fiestas," Vega said.

The DOH last week classified Metro Manila as low risk following the decline in its COVID-19 daily cases and average daily attack rate.

Following the reclassification, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) immediately broached the idea of placing the capital region under the most relaxed modified general community quarantine (MGCQ), where more business establishments will be allowed to operate and the public given looser mobility controls.

The NCR is currently under general community quarantine with some restrictions. It was placed under strict lockdown in late March and April after a surge in cases and deaths were recorded.

And while NCR is already continuously improving, the country's treatment czar said they continue to enhance their response to the Visayas and Mindanao regions experiencing a surge in cases.

"Our focus now is in helping the provinces. We have deployed the necessary medical equipment in the high risk areas," said Vega.

Similarly, he said donations of mechanical ventilators and bi-level positive airway pressure (BPAP) machines have been deployed.

For his part, former Philippine Medical Association (PMA) president Dr. Bu Castro urged the national and local governments to adopt digital innovations to improve the delivery of healthcare services as well as help unburden medical frontliners.

"The healthcare industry can devise a way to enable doctors to attend to their patients without the risks of exposure to COVID-19, while patients are provided quality treatment," said Castro at the Globe Business Webinar held last Saturday.

Castro stressed that digitization may help alleviate stress on the manual process and give healthcare workers more time to handle cases without having to worry about the administrative aspect.

Several regions in the Visayas and Mindanao are seeing surge in cases of COVID-19.

Identified as being "high risk" are the regions of Caraga, Western Visayas, Davao Region, and Soccsksargen.