



DOH tracks 55 more Delta cases

BY GERARD NAVAL

THE Department of Health (DOH) yesterday reported 55 more cases of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) caused by the more transmissible Delta variant, bringing the total number of cases in the country to 119.

In a statement, the DOH reported that of the 55 new Delta variant cases detected by the Philippine Genome Center (PGC), 37 are local cases, 17 are returning overseas Filipino (ROFs), and one case is currently being verified if it is "a local or ROF case."

Out of the 37 local cases, 14 were from the Calabarzon, eight from Northern Mindanao, six each in the National Capital Region and Central Luzon, two from Davao Region, and one from

the Ilocos Region.

The DOH said one has died while the 54 other cases have been tagged as recovered.

Last Thursday, the DOH declared a local transmission of the COVID-19 Delta variant in the Philippines.

Aside from the Delta variant, the health department said the PGC also detected additional cases of other COVID-19 variants -- 94 Alpha (UK/B.1.1.7) variant cases, 179 Beta (South Africa/B.1.351) variant cases, and 9 P.3 (Philippine).

Of the additional 94 Alpha variant cases detected, 87 are local cases, one ROF, and six are being verified if they are local or ROF cases.

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Based on the case line list, one remains active, two cases have died, and 91 cases have been tagged as recovered. The additional cases bring the total Alpha variant cases to 1,775.

Among the additional 179 Beta variant cases, 168 were local cases, four were ROFs, and seven cases are currently being verified if they are local or ROF cases. Based on the case line list, two are still active, one died, 175 have been tagged as recovered, and one outcome that is currently being verified. The total Beta variant cases are now at 2,019. Of the nine additional P.3 variant cases, all have been found as local cases. Based on the case line list, all 9 have been tagged as recovered. The total P.3 variant cases is now at 244.

According to the DOH, the consecutive releases of batches of whole genome sequencing results

over the past weeks is a result of the added resources being provided to the DOH and PGC for COVID-19 biosurveillance.

"Samples with more recent collection dates and those from areas with spikes were prioritized to determine the presence and spread of these variants in these areas," noted the DOH.

And with more COVID-19 variants being detected, the DOH renewed its call for local government units to immediately contain observed case increases through granular lockdowns and stronger Prevent-Detect-Isolate-Treat-Reintegrate (PDITR) implementation.

Meanwhile, the DOH reported 5,479 new COVID-19 cases with 93 deaths. Three laboratories were not able to submit their data to the COVID-19 Document Repository System (CDRS) last July 23.

The country now has 1,548,755 COVID-19 reported cases and 27,224 total deaths.

The independent OCTA Research Team warned that the spread of the Delta variant may cause a surge in Metro Manila that is worse than the one seen last April, but added it is not yet too late to counter the emerging trend.

"If we don't focus on this, this could escalate to more cases than or a similar surge to what we saw in March and April. This is a cause for concern," OCTA Research fellow Dr. Guido David said in a radio interview.

According to OCTA's last monitoring report, cases in NCR increased by 39 percent, from 613 last week to 851 for the period of July 16 to 22.

The reproduction rate in Metro Manila also went up to 1.21 from 0.92 in the previous week.

The World Health Organization has repeatedly said that the target is to maintain COVID-19's reproduction rate at below 1.

Still, OCTA stressed that it is not

yet too late to provide adequate response to the spike in cases, such as the imposition of stricter community restrictions, curfew, border control, and wider vaccination coverage.

"It's not irreversible. There is still a window for us to have intervention and slow down this increase in cases," he said.

Infectious disease expert Dr. Anna Ong-Lim, who is a member of the DOH Technical Advisory Group, urged public and private hospitals to increase their COVID-19 allotted hospital beds, and recommended a more intensified implementation of border controls and travel protocols, and calibrated lockdowns.

Ong-Lim said the government should also continue implementing the health department's "four-door strategy" to keep the Delta variant cases down.

Ong-Lim also said: "We need to work on the premise that every

case that's now detected is Delta so that we can act accordingly."

Ong-Lim said the government must ensure the continued readiness of the health care system by ensuring the availability of hospital beds, especially intensive care units (ICU) beds and isolation facilities.

She said government hospitals should increase the COVID-19 bed capacity to 50 percent and private hospitals to 30 percent. Bed allocation at present is 30 percent in government hospitals and 20 percent in private hospitals.

Ong-Lim also emphasized the need for continued border control to slow down the entry not just of patients with the Delta variant but also of those infected with other variants of concerns.

She said LGUs must also help monitor individuals who have already completed the 10-day national government facility quarantine to ensure that the remaining four-day quarantine is observed at

home or at an LGU-based facility.

She also said that LGUs must also strictly implement localized lockdowns when needed.

Technical Working Group member Dr. Edsel Salvana, in the same meeting, emphasized the need to accelerate vaccinations, and adherence to basic health protocols to counter the Delta variant.

He also reiterated the need to continue to wear face masks and face shields.

President Duterte called for a meeting of the the Interagency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) on Saturday night following the rising cases of Delta variant in the country.

Cabinet Secretary Kalro Nograles, in an interview with radio dzBB yesterday, reiterated the need to follow minimum protocols even if a person has already been inoculated or has completed their two doses of vaccination. — *With Jocelyn Montemayor*