



# DOH admits 'disconnect' between COVID data, hospital realities



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The Department of Health (DOH) on Saturday acknowledged the "disconnect" between its COVID-19 data and the actual situation in hospitals, many of which are filling up to capacity amid the continued rise in coronavirus infections.

Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire agreed with the observation of health workers that the department's data did not correspond to what was happening on the ground.

She said this was because hospitals only reported data on confirmed cases and not suspect and probable cases.

"We are trying to monitor the situation. There is kind of a disconnect because, of course, our hospitals submit the confirmed positive individuals. The suspects and probables who are in the hospitals are not counted properly," Vergeire said at Saturday's Laging Handa briefing.

"So we are trying to coordinate now with our hospitals so that they will also report to us suspects and probable cases," she added.

A year and a half into the pandemic, the country continues to deal with surges in COVID-19 infections, with the

latest numbers attributed to the more infectious Delta variant of the novel coronavirus.

Health-care groups have formed a united front to call out the government for what they said was its inadequate pandemic response.

## Herd immunity

They also cited the government's incomplete data on the pandemic situation on the ground, the "unspent or mispent" funds allotted to the DOH and other agencies and the delayed release of health workers' benefits.

Another aspect of the government's pandemic response that has also come under scrutiny is the pace of its vaccination rollout.

As of Sept. 1, 12.94 percent of the country's population of 109 million have been fully vaccinated.

To achieve herd immunity, the government is targeting the full vaccination of 64 percent, or 70 million of the population.

Despite the slow pace of the vaccine rollout, the government raised its herd immunity target to 90 percent to deal with the mutations of the coronavirus.

"[O]ur experts increased this to 90 percent because of the effect [of the variants] on the efficacy of the vaccines," Vergeire said.

As for booster shots, she said "Some of our experts say at least 50 percent should be vaccinated so that those who have yet to receive even a single dose would

not be disenfranchised if we would undergo booster dosing."

## Virus case update

Vergeire maintained that the most vulnerable segments of the population—health workers, senior citizens and persons with comorbidities—must be vaccinated first.

The DOH reported 20,741 COVID-19 cases on Saturday, the second straight day that infections breached the 20,000 mark.

The latest figure was the second highest since the pandemic began, and this brought the total coronavirus cases to 2,061,084. The country first breached the 2-million mark on Wednesday.

There are 157,646 active cases, of which 94.7 percent are mild,

1.9 percent are asymptomatic, 1.6 percent are moderate, 1.2 percent are severe and 0.6 percent are critical.

The DOH also reported 21,962 recoveries, bringing the total COVID-19 survivors to 1,869,376.

Another 189 people have died, which brought the total fatalities to 34,062.

Five laboratories were unable to submit their data to the COVID-19 Document Repository System.

Vergeire said coronavirus cases would still increase by the end of September, despite the community quarantine restrictions.

"We expect that cases would continue to rise. Our hope is that the severe and critical cases would not increase," she said. **INQ**