



Republic of the Philippines
 Department of Health
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Communications Management Unit

Newspaper: Philippine Daily Inquirer
 Date: Sept. 16, 2021
 Page/s: 18

GOV'T-RUN LAB TO CHARGE ONLY P1,800

IN ILOILO CITY, MORE TESTS SEEN WITH RT-PCR FEE CUT

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ILOILO CITY—The city government has twice slashed the price of COVID-19 tests in the local government-run laboratory to encourage voluntary testing amid the continued increase in cases.

In an amended ordinance passed on Sept. 7, the city council reduced the cost of the reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) test at Uswag Iloilo City Molecular Laboratory from P2,500 to P1,800. The council on Sept. 1 already lowered the rate from P3,800 to P2,500, which is effective until Dec. 31.

The council, in its ordinance, cited the rising COVID-19 cases in the city and the need for more residents to undergo voluntary testing.

Helping business sector

It said the price drop would make the test affordable to those not covered by the free RT-PCR testing provided by the city government. The free tests at Jubilee Hall here are for symptomatic patients with doctor's referral, close contacts of infected persons, returning overseas Filipinos and returning residents.

"I am very happy that our



FIGHTING VIRUS The Iloilo City government hopes that lower fees for COVID-19 tests will encourage more residents to have themselves tested. The city also provides free tests for symptomatic patients with doctor's referral, close contacts of infected persons, returning overseas Filipinos and returning residents. —PHOTO COURTESY OF ILOILO CITY MAYOR'S OFFICE

city council was able to approve my request to lower the rate of RT-PCR test from P2,500 to P1,800 to assist the business sector as they reopen their businesses," Mayor Jerry Treñas said in a statement.

The city remains under modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ), the second highest community quarantine level, at least until Sept. 30. It was placed under MECQ on May 23 and raised to the highest level, enhanced community quarantine, on July 16 before being downgraded to MECQ on Aug. 15.

The city recorded 171 new cases, including two deaths on Sept. 13.

Nurses infected

Treñas said many hospitals in the city were operating on limited capacity and some had suspended certain services due to infection of their health staff.

Iloilo Doctors Hospital on Monday suspended consultation services of its outpatient department as well as emergency admissions after several of its emergency nurses were infected.

In Capiz province, Roxas Memorial Provincial Hospital (RMPH) said it was nearing capacity due to the surge in COVID-19 patients requiring hospitalization.

"Once the [hospital] reaches full capacity, there will be no other option but to declare a 'timeout' to allow the hospital to cater to the patients already admitted, who deserve the best care available," the hospital management said in a statement.

Critical oxygen supply

It said its supply of medical oxygen had fallen to critical levels due to the lack of funds and a nationwide shortage.

The hospital uses from 120 to 130 oxygen tanks daily for its high-flow cannulas used for the treatment of severe and critically ill COVID-19 patients.

"We have been informed by our medical oxygen suppliers that they may not be able to keep up with the demand ... because of the heightened demand for supplies in Region 6, particularly in Iloilo, where the need is highest and where most of the medical oxygen supplies have been earmarked," it said.

"The hospital cannot admit more patients without compromising the level of care that it gives to its patients and overwhelming its staff and personnel," according to RMPH. INQ

