

1,464 virus cases make QC hardest hit area in NCR

But chief epidemiologist says increase in numbers due to mass testing

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As community-based testing is ramped up in all six districts of Quezon City, its chief epidemiologist said the increase in the number of cases could be an indication that the local government “[was] on the right track” in its fight against the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

As of Wednesday, the Department of Health had recorded 1,464 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the city, 1,102 of which were validated by the QC Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit (QCESU) and health offices in the different districts.

Quezon City now accounts for around 25 percent of the total number of confirmed cases in Metro Manila, which makes it the hardest hit locality.

But according to Dr. Rolly Cruz, the city’s head epidemiologist, this only proves how testing has become an integral part of the local government’s campaign of identifying, isolating and treating COVID-19 positive patients.

Proper care

“Testing is like driving with headlights on, which is way better than driving in the dark. Through it, we can properly isolate and give care to our patients who tested positive,” he said.

In partnership with subnational laboratories, local government hospitals and other groups, Cruz said the city expected a total of 140 samples to be analyzed and tested per day.

Two weeks since the city launched its community-based testing program, more than 3,000 patients have been tested to date, with a target of 10,000 patients by the end of May.

On Wednesday alone, a total of 196 tests were conducted by the QCESU in community-based testing centers and local government hospitals.

This coincided with the opening of new community-based testing centers in Districts 1, 2 and 3—at Esteban Abada Elementary School, Batasan National High School and Old Balara Covered Court, respectively. Each center can run up to 50 tests a day.

The city also has testing centers in District 4 (Quezon City Experience or QCX at Quezon Memorial Circle), District 5 (SB Park Novaliches) and District 6 (University of the Philippines’ Asian Institute of Tourism on Commonwealth Avenue).

Faster turnaround

“Even with that, there are certain setbacks in terms of the turnaround time for results. Hopefully, with the help of the national government, this can also be addressed,” Cruz said. Joseph Juico, project manager of Quezon City’s community-based testing, said the local government was aiming to raise its testing capacity to 300 to 500 tests.

He added that they were planning to set up their own polymerase chain reaction (PCR) laboratory and to scale up the manpower of QCESU for contact tracing.