

QC LOOKING FOR 3 COVID-19 PATIENTS SENT HOME BY HOSPITALS

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Three patients in Quezon City who tested positive for the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19) were sent home by hospitals that did not have space for them, Mayor Joy Belmonte said on Sunday.

In a television interview, Belmonte said she was shocked to learn on Saturday night that the patients had returned to their communities, which were reportedly urban poor areas where dense living quarters could allow the virus to spread much more quickly. “That’s a little shocking and a little disturbing,” she said, adding, “We are trying to look for ways to extract the positive persons from the rest of the group and brought somewhere else.”

According to Belmonte, the three were initially persons under investigation (PUIS) who were asked to go home after being tested for the virus. Health facilities, already reeling from the influx of patients, did not have the infrastructure to keep those waiting for results, she said.

Belmonte added, however, that even though they had not shown severe symptoms, the patients should have been picked up and brought to a facility as soon as the results came up positive.

“In this case, because of the lack of infrastructure, they are no longer picked up,” she said.

At press time, the local government said that members of the Quezon City health department were still attempting to locate and extract the three patients based on the addresses they had given at the hospitals.

The facilities that sent the patients home were not identified by the city government. Belmonte also declined to say which areas they resided in, arguing that it could lead to “a lot of stigma” and panic in the tight-knit communities they hailed from.

But her statement that PUIS were being sent home after tests “as a matter of protocol” could mean several more COVID-19 positive patients would return to their households until facilities for them were established.

“Because there’s no place for them to stay while they’re waiting for results, they get sent home. Even if they’re positive, they get sent home,” she said. “People are sent home even if they belong to gated subdivisions or to any socioeconomic situation.” She added that the local government was looking into refashioning rooms in a hotel being used as a hospital since Thursday into a facility where PUIS could be isolated. The mayor said the three patients who returned home were showing “very mild symptoms.”

Several villages in Quezon City—the most populous metropolis in the country with about three million residents— were placed under an extreme enhanced community quarantine, under which there is a total prohibition on entering and exiting certain neighborhoods.