

14 PUIS in QC told to return home

City government says 7 in isolation, 7 to be taken to alternate health facility

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Hospitals at full capacity sent back home 14 Quezon City residents who could be carrying the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the local government said on Monday. It added, however, that efforts were in place to extract and transfer seven of these 14 persons under investigation (PUIS) to Hope 1, a former hotel that had been repurposed into a health facility as government hospitals struggled to cope with the rising number of confirmed COVID-19 cases.

Hope 1 has 49 rooms dedicated to isolating and monitoring PUIS. According to Mike Marasigan, head of the Quezon City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, the basketball court at Quezon Memorial Circle is also being prepared as a temporary quarantine area.

Similar cases?

At press time, the government had yet to say how many of the 14 had tested positive for COVID-19 and whether the three similar cases reported on Sunday were included in the number.

The rush to establish alternate medical facilities followed the revelation on Sunday by Mayor Joy Belmonte that hospitals without a holding room for patients had sent three Quezon City residents back to their communities after they underwent testing for COVID-19.

Even after their tests came out positive, the three were not picked up, or brought to a medical facility. Belmonte said they also lived in urban poor communities, where high density made the spread of the disease very likely.

The first batch of the 14 who will be brought to Hope 1 similarly resided in urban poor areas, the local government said. The other seven were reportedly self-isolating in houses in more affluent neighborhoods.

The hospitals that did not admit the patients were not named, but the local government made it clear that the facilities did not approach them for assistance before allowing the Quezon City residents to return home.

“The decision of various Metro Manila hospitals to send home three Quezon City residents experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 was based on protocols set by the Department of Health [DOH],” the local government said in a statement.

Rolando Cruz, head of the Quezon City Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit, specifically cited DOH Memorandum No. 2020-0108, issued on March 11, which instructed that patients “who exhibit mild symptoms with no comorbidities and are nonelderly” should be sent home for strict self-isolation.

Poor living conditions

“Keeping them home is alarming because of the conditions in which they live and the ease with which they can transmit the disease,” Belmonte had said.

Because some of the hospitals that sent the patients home were based outside Quezon City, it was highly likely that several more Covid-19-positive patients from other cities could have also been sent home amid the shortage in facilities.