

# Joy: QC lockdown over new COVID variant baseless

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Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte said there is no basis to declare a lockdown in any part of the city after the country recorded its first case of the more contagious United Kingdom variant of COVID-19 from a resident who recently travelled to United Arab Emirates. Belmonte said the patient, a 29-year-old real estate agent from Barangay Kamuning, immediately went on quarantine and did not set foot in the community upon his return to the country last Jan. 7.

“As per protocol, he was admitted to a quarantine hotel in Manila, where he and his partner were tested,” she said in a press briefing yesterday. “This person did not set foot in the community. He did not go home and mingle with anyone from Barangay Kamuning. He went directly to the isolation facility.”

Based on the policy set by the city government, special concern lockdowns are implemented in high-density areas such as compounds where community transmission is recorded.

“It seems to me that the virus appears to have been acquired abroad. Since the index case did not set foot in the barangay, it is very unlikely that he infected his neighbors. There is no basis yet to declare a lockdown there,” the mayor added in Filipino.

The patient and his girlfriend went to UAE last Dec. 27 for a business meeting. They were negative for COVID-19 in tests conducted in Manila before they left and in Dubai upon their arrival.

They returned to the Philippines last Jan. 7 and proceeded to a quarantine hotel in Manila. When the man tested positive for the virus, the barangay health emergency response team of Barangay Kamuning provided him with assistance and transferred him to the isolation facility in Quezon City, as per protocol.

While the barangay and isolation facility staff were expected to have followed safety protocols throughout the processes, they were nevertheless asked to isolate and underwent testing to ensure that they did not acquire the virus.

City epidemiology and surveillance unit head Rolly Cruz said the patient is doing well and is taking antibiotics after he was diagnosed with pneumonia.

“He was worried when we told him that he had the new variant. He asked if he needs to take other medications but we told him to just continue with the antibiotics,” he said in Filipino.

“He no longer has cough and can speak well now. We have doctors, nurses and personnel (monitoring his condition) in our Hope facility,” he added, referring to the isolation facility established by the city government.

The patient’s girlfriend, meanwhile, was initially allowed to finish her 14-day quarantine at home since she tested negative and lives alone in her house.

Cruz said they transferred her to an isolation facility on Wednesday night upon confirmation that her partner had acquired the UK variant.

Officials are currently awaiting her test results to make sure that she was not infected.