

QC: UK variant patient now negative

Over 300 contacts traced

The Philippine Star · 13 Feb 2021 · 10 · By JANVIC MATEO

Quezon City health officials have already traced some 300 contacts of the outbound overseas worker who contracted the more infectious United Kingdom variant of COVID-19.

Mayor Joy Belmonte said yesterday the 35-year-old male patient, who was brought by his manning agency to a residential area in the city without coordination with local officials, tested negative for the viral illness.

But he will remain in isolation after he exhibited symptoms such as cough, she added.

Officials are still waiting for the test result of the other person in the apartment in Riverside, Barangay Commonwealth where the patient stayed since Jan. 21.

Rolly Cruz, head of the city epidemiology and surveillance unit, said they have already traced and interviewed some 350 residents living within the 50-meter radius of the apartment.

Eight of them exhibited symptoms and were advised to remain in home quarantine while waiting for results.

Swabs were also taken from around 100 others, with the rest to be completed this week.

Earlier, Cruz underscored the challenge in conducting contact tracing, noting that the positive swab samples from the patient were collected last Jan. 17.

“We are assuming that he was not able to totally quarantine in the area considering that it is not suitable for isolation,” Cruz said in a mix of English and Filipino.

“We are also assuming that he goes out (of the apartment) to buy food since there was no support from the barangay because they were not informed,” he added.

The city has also identified the driver of the ride-hailing application used to transport the patient from the hotel in Manila, with his contacts currently being traced.

“Hopefully we will finish the swabbing (by Friday). We have not yet recommended lockdown in the area since there are no clustering of cases yet,” said the city health official.

“But since we have swabbed members of the community, it is a protocol that they should not go out of their homes.”

Charges eyed

Earlier, Belmonte said the city would file a case against a manning agency that transferred the patient without coordination with local officials.

The patient was among the eight UK variant cases announced by the Department of Health last Feb. 5, with his address initially indicated to be in Liloan, Cebu.

Locating him was delayed as it turned out that he has been in Metro Manila since November to secure a placement for a job overseas.

The Quezon City government said the patient stayed in Parañaque and frequently visited his manning agency in Manila, the most recent of which was in Jan. 14.

While waiting for deployment, he stayed at a hotel in Manila and underwent a swab test last Jan. 17. He received the positive result the following day.

A few days later, however, his manning agency transferred him from the hotel to an apartment in Riverside using a ride-hailing service.

Belmonte questioned why he was allowed to leave the hotel despite being positive for the viral illness.

“This is a breach of protocol clearly because they are not supposed to release positive patients to any other entity but to the Barangay Health Emergency and Response Teams or hospitals for that matter,” she said.

“The city itself was not notified. We were not aware that this person was there. That is the second breach of protocol,” the mayor added.

Belmonte said they will file charges against the manning agency for violating Republic Act 11332 or the Mandatory Reporting of Notifiable Diseases and Health Events of Public Health Concern Act.

She said they will also coordinate with the Manila city government to determine the agency’s compliance with operation protocols, as well as with the Bureau of Quarantine regarding the protocols at quarantine facilities.

“This agency placed an entire community at risk by bringing a COVID-19 positive patient to our city, considering that both their agency and the quarantine hotel are in Manila,” said Belmonte. “I feel that their irresponsibility has put our community at risk.”