

QC intensifies fight vs HIV 'surge'

Daily Tribune (Philippines) · 9 Jun 2025 · A7 · BY JING VILLAMENTE

Despite a reported 500 percent increase in national HIV and AIDS cases, the local government of Quezon City on Sunday stressed its commitment to combating the epidemic through strong local leadership, accessible services and community involvement.

From January to May 2025, Quezon City recorded 421 new HIV diagnoses, a 7.7 percent increase compared to 391 cases during the same period in 2024. Of those diagnosed this year, 149 (35 percent) were among the "Young Key Population," aged 15-24, with 40 percent of them being students.

"With the significant increase of cases among ages 15 to 24, we make sure that all of them are receiving the treatment they need in our city's Social Hygiene Clinics," Mayor Joy Belmonte said.

The city has seen a consistent rise in HIV testing over the past three years. More than 21,000 people were tested from January to May 2025, representing a 16.7 percent increase from the same period in 2024, a 22.5 percent increase from 2023, and a 60 percent increase from 2022.

Quezon City Epidemiologist Dr. Rolando Cruz said that strengthening testing capacities is crucial for early detection and linking individuals to treatment.

"Because more tests mean more people are aware of their status, and that allows us to respond faster," Cruz said. "The first step in fighting any epidemic is information."

The local government has established Social Hygiene and Sundown Clinics in five of its six districts, offering free and confidential services such as HIV and AIDS testing, Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP), Antiretroviral Therapy (ART), counseling, and testing/treatment for other sexually transmitted infections.

Meantime, Klinika Talipapa in District 6 is slated to open in 2026, completing the citywide network. These facilities operate beyond regular hours to ensure accessibility.

A notable initiative is Klinika Eastwood's "Drive, Park and Test" program, allowing clients to receive HIV testing from their vehicles.

The Quezon City Service Delivery Network also plays a key role by seamlessly referring persons living with HIV from testing centers to treatment hubs. This network, comprising health facilities, community-based organizations and civil society groups, provides integrated support, including psychosocial interventions and treatment adherence counseling.