



## UP Manila Bulletin No. 2 on COVID-19: 12 February 2020

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE UP MANILA FACULTY, STUDENTS, and STAFF regarding the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infections

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#### What important events related to the COVID-19 happened in the last week?

- As of today, the Philippines has only three (3) confirmed cases of COVID-19. All cases came from China.
- The last positive case reported by the DOH was on 05 February 2020 which is six days ago already. This is a very hopeful sign! That there have been no additional cases over a long stretch of several days is, indeed, an encouraging trend.
- The long two-week period since the Chinese New Year when we had a surge of travelers and tourists is over! The 14-day incubation period for exposures which may have happened during the weekend of January 24-26 has lapsed!
- Contact tracing reported by the DOH appears to have been completed. And, so far, it seems that no transmission has been detected.
- While the Persons Under Investigation (PUIs) have increased to over 300, the number of PUIs who have been discharged because of negative tests is not clearly reported but can be extrapolated. This is because the reporting mechanism of the DOH represents a cumulative number (since the start).
- It appears also that, so far, **there has been no local transmission in our country**. This is very, very important!

- In PGH, we only had 1 PUI Admission on 03 February 2020. He was subsequently discharged after the test came back negative for the COVID-19.
- There have been no consults for possible PUI in the last 5 days.
- Globally, though, there continues to be a surge of cases and deaths in China. As of 12 February 2020, the WHO Situation Report showed: “Total world 40,554 confirmed cases; China 45,171 confirmed; 8,204 severe cases and 1,114 deaths; 24 countries with confirmed cases.” (<https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200212-sitrep-23-ncov.pdf>)
- On 12 February 2020, WHO announces the new name of the virus as: COVID-19.

### **What can we do as a UP Community?**

- **For the COVID-19 taskforce at the PGH**, let us continue to be vigilant!
  - A special COVID-19 unit will soon be ready! Let us cooperate with the preparedness plans and be ready to respond!
  - We need to be prepared. Our COVID-19 rooms are being set up so they can be converted quickly to ICU-capable rooms.
  - The carpentry and engineering sectors are doing their work as fast as they can.
  - Our nurses and doctors, utility workers, and ambulance staff are all preparing themselves. We all need to remain focused and ready.
  - It is very important that we learn to wear our Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) correctly. We have to believe that if we wear our PPE properly, we will remain protected.
  - The Philippine Society for Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (PSMID), together with the Pediatric Infectious Diseases in the Philippines (PIDSP) and the Philippine Hospital Infection Control Society (PHICS) released the **Guidelines on Triaging, Clinical Management, and Infection Control for the COVID-19** (attached) this week! Many of the board members of these societies are UP faculty!
- **For the rest of the UP community:**
  - Let’s make hand hygiene a part of our daily routine.
  - There is generally no need to wear masks (as we discussed in last update).
  - If you feel ill with sore throat, cough, colds, fever, and other flu-like illness – that’s the time you should wear a surgical mask and stay at home.
  - There is no need to cancel classes.

- There is no need to cancel important happy or serious events at this time. Just make sure to plan them well and have contingency plans! For instance, have posters advising persons who are ill to stay away from the activity. (*See checklist for event preparation.*)
  - Keep yourselves updated.
  - The same general principles continue: HAND HYGIENE, RESPIRATORY ETIQUETTE, PERSONS WITH ACUTE RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES SHOULD STAY AT HOME OR CONSULT.
  - Some of us may see this COVID-19 as a dreadful mishap in our history. But some of us (scientists, biotechnologists, and so on) may find opportunities to learn, discover, and create towards the greater good for us all! Congratulations to Dr. Raul Destura and team of the UP-NIH who have been able to develop diagnostic kits to augment testing for the coronavirus!
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- **For pedestrians who enter the Padre Faura Gate**, we will be announcing soon re-routing as the COVID-19 Unit opens in the old Spine Unit. The earliest possible closure of the Pedestrian Gate is on 14 February 2020. Please be guided accordingly.

### **Five Most Frequently Asked Questions this Week:**

- **I have a stopover in Taipei when I travel to the US in March. Will I be quarantined?**

*On 10 February 2020, the Philippine government included Taiwan in the temporary travel ban. Check with your airline this early. It is likely that your flight was rerouted.*

*Entry to the US depends on the travel restrictions imposed by the US Immigration during the period of your travel. If the travel ban is still in place by the time you travel back to Manila, and you pass by Taipei as stopover, then you will be required to go on self-quarantine for 14 days.*

- **I am a nurse and I took care of the PUI last week. Should I go on quarantine?**

*The recommendations for healthcare workers (HCWs) tell us that for as long as the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is worn properly by the HCW as he/she cares for a*

*Patients Under Investigation (PUI) or confirmed to have the COVID-19, there is no need to go on quarantine. The PPE worn according to protocol should protect the HCW. The HCW wearing proper PPE is NOT considered a close contact and NOT a COVID-19 exposure.*

*If the patient's test is negative for the virus, then there is no risk. If the patient's test returns as positive, the HCW can continue to report to work and should also monitor his/her body temperature twice daily. The UP Health Service (UPHS) will monitor these HCWs. For any temperature more or equal to 38°C, the HCW should consult and should be admitted as a PUI.*

*If, however, the HCW becomes negligent and fails to follow the strict PPE requirements or experiences a breach in infection control, the HCW should be pulled out from regular work and go on quarantine for 14 days.*

*This is how important the use of PPE is in the screening and management of the virus.*

- **We have a post-graduate course in March and everything has been paid for already! Should we cancel the event?**

*Currently, there are no secondary infections from the initial set of confirmed cases from China to suggest local transmission. There is no need to cancel school and academic events. Follow checklist of Event Preparation in light of COVID-19.*

- **How much is the COVID-19 test? What is it? Is it a blood test? How long does the result come back?**

*The test is free and currently available only at the RITM. The specimens are obtained from the throat and are called nasopharyngeal swab and an oropharyngeal swab. The test is called the "Real Time PCR for Novel Coronavirus." The results are released in 48 hours.*

- **I just arrived from Singapore and I feel well. But because of the ongoing developments in Singapore, I want to have the COVID-19 test done. Can I go to RITM, pay for the test and skip the lines?**

*The situation in Singapore has changed in the last several days. There has been increase in the number of cases in Singapore: now at 47 confirmed cases, some of whom have no links to previous cases or travel history to China. Thus, local transmission has been*

*documented in Singapore. The Disease Outbreak Response System Condition or DORSCON was turned up to Orange.*

*Despite these events in Singapore, and you are well here in the Philippines, then you do not need to be tested for the novel coronavirus. Even if you go the RITM, you will not be allowed to have the test unless you meet the criteria for PUI. You should monitor yourself closely over the next 14 days.*

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