What to do with latest fatality? DOH is mum

BY GERARD NAVAL

THE Department of Health yesterday remained mum on what should be done with the remains of the 67-year-old female patient who died on Wednesday at the Manila Doctors Hospital, the second fatality of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in the country.

In a previous interview, DOH spokesman Eric Domingo said COVID-19 fatalities should immediately undergo cremation.

“When a person dies from infectious illness, part of the protocol is to cremate as soon as possible,” Domingo said last February after reporting the death of Patient 2, a 44-year-old Chinese male, whose remains were rejected by various crematoriums.

Meanwhile, three new COVID cases were confirmed by the DOH yesterday, bringing the total number of patients afflicted with the disease in the country to 52.

In a statement, the DOH said the three – females aged 26, 69 and 79 – are confined at the Medical City and Asian Hospital and Medical Center. The first two have no travel history while the third traveled to the United Kingdom.

The DOH said the latest fatalities, officially referred to as Patient 35, experienced symptoms last February 29 and was admitted last March 4 at the Manila Doctors’ Hospital.

The patient tested positive last March 11, and passed away around noon of the same day due to severe pneumonia caused by COVID-19.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III said the patient had pre-existing medical conditions, particularly hypertension and diabetes.

“Our recent mortality has underlined medical conditions, making the patient extremely vulnerable to COVID-19,” Duque said.

The latest fatality’s 72-year-old husband is in stable condition, according to a communiqué from the Manila Doctors Hospital, although he is confirmed to have acquired the virus.

“The second patient (Patient 34) was admitted last March 8. He is currently in isolation and is in stable condition,” the hospital, adding the patient is set to be transferred to another facility on request of family members.

DOH data showed that Patient 35 neither had history of travel nor exposure to a COVID-19 case.

According to the hospital, she was put in isolation pending results of her specimen sent to the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM).

“She succumbed to the disease prior to the release of the result from RITM on March 11, 2020,” the hospital said, adding their personnel, medical staff, and other paramedical personnel exposed to the two patients have been placed under quarantine.

NEW CASES IN QC, SAN JUAN

Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte yesterday said another resident has tested positive for the virus, bringing to five the number of positive cases in the city.

Belmonte said the patient, a 26-year-old male from BL Crame, was fetched by Department of Health personnel from his residence yesterday for confinement.

Belmonte said the patient, who has no history of travel abroad, had earlier sought medical attention from a private hospital but the diagnosis was dengue.

“He has been to two private hospitals and it’s the second private hospital that told him he has COVID-19. He was told to go home,” Belmonte said, adding health workers are testing the victim’s mother and three other household members for possible infection.

The four other Quezon City residents who have tested positive for the virus were a doctor who had attended to COVID-19 patients, a retiree, a sales manager and another doctor.

San Juan Mayor Francis Zamora also reported that a 57-year-old man residing in Barangay Greenhills has also tested positive, the city’s eighth case.

3 MORE OFWW’S POSITIVE

Three more Filipinos in Singapore have tested positive for the virus, according to the Singapore health ministry, bringing to six the number of Filipinos infected by the virus in the city state.

The health ministry said the three travelled to the Philippines before testing and are among 12 new cases recorded in Singapore.

The three includes a 35-year-old woman who sought treatment last March 9 at the Ng Teng Fong General Hospital where she worked as a staff nurse after experiencing symptoms of the virus.

A 37-year-old Filipino, a relative of the woman, also tested positive for the virus and is in isolation at the same hospital.

The other positive case is 42-year-old Filipina who visits the Philippines from February 27 to March 2.

TEST KITS IN FIELD TESTS

It will take two weeks or earlier before a test kit that detects the coronavirus will be deployed in public health facilities.

This is required by Food and Drug Administration (FDA) protocol, Dr. Raul V. Destura said yesterday, to ensure that “no short cuts” are made.

It will be a boost to the Department of Health’s efforts to contain and manage the rising number of virus cases in the country.

Destura’s research team at the National Institutes of Health University of the Philippines (UP) Manila campus and the Philippine Genome Center in UP Diliman developed the Real-Time Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) diagnostic kit that detects COVID-19.

The Real-time Polymerase Chain Reaction technology enables hospitals and clinics to quickly diagnose a patient to confirm a COVID-19 infection. — With Victo Reyes, Askzel Machero, Christina Oñizar, and Paul Isaacina