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[Secretary's Corner](#) [Procurement \(/procurement\)](#) [Beat COVID-19 \(/2019-nCoV\)](#) [Health Systems](#)

DOH EXPLAINS COVID-19 TREATMENT PROTOCOLS PRESS RELEASE/16 APRIL 2020

The Department of Health (DOH) yesterday explained the protocols on treating COVID-19 patients, including off-label medicines allowed to be administered to them, and how healthcare workers monitor their situation while admitted in a COVID-19 health facility.

In its Thursday episode of ***Beat COVID-19 Virtual Presser***, Dr. Beverly Lorraine Ho, OIC- Director IV for Health Promotion and Communication Service was joined by Dr. Marissa Alejandria, President of the Philippine Society of Microbiology & Infectious Diseases and Professor at the University of the Philippines General Hospital, Department of Clinical Epidemiology, National Institutes of Health, and Dr. Deonne Gauiran, a hematologist at the Philippine General Hospital (PGH)

Dr. Alejandria explained that the patient needs to undergo examinations such as x-ray or CT scan and blood test for monitoring purposes, prior to admission.

“Tungkol naman sa gamot na ibibigay sa kanila, tama ang sabi ni Usec Vergeire, wala pa talaga tayong ‘magic drug’ or epektibong gamot na napag-aralan o na-establish sa mga clinical trial na epektibo at safe gamitin para sa COVID-19,” said Dr. Alejandria as she reminded the public not to try medicines without Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval to avoid side effects.

Dr. Alejandrino explained that the current treatment protocol for COVID-19 patients is only supportive due to the absence of FDA-approved medicines that are effective against the virus. *“Binabantayan po natin ang pasyente, binibigyan ng paracetamol, hydration, mino-monitor sa ward, tapos kung mas nahihirapang huminga, ililipat natin sa ICU; pwede po syang mailagay sa ventilator para masuportahan yung function ng бага, so, yun ang standard of care,”* she elaborated.

Dr. Gauiran on the other hand shared his knowledge on convalescent plasma therapy which the PGH is currently performing under the guidance and in accordance with the strict protocols issued by the FDA.

“Ang convalescent plasma therapy ay isang uri ng paggagamot kung saan ang plasma o likidong parte ng dugo ng isang taong gumaling na sa impeksyon ay isinasalin or itina-transfuse sa isang pasyente,” shared Dr. Gauiran.

However, Dr. Gauiran emphasized that although the therapy was already proven safe and effective against SARS, MERS-CoV, H1N1 and Ebola, there is no evidence yet to show that it is effective against SARS-Cov2.

“Gusto rin naming bigyan diin, tulad ng sinabi ni Dr. Alejandria, na ang convalescent plasma therapy ay isa pa ring investigational na paggamot ngayon at kailangan pa ring sumailalim sa masusi at malawakang pag-aaral,” Dr. Gauiran explained.

Meanwhile, Dr. Ho stressed that patients experiencing mild symptoms of COVID-19 like fever, cough or sore throat should not take antibiotics without the advice of a health professional. Instead, she advised patients to take paracetamol every four hours to manage fever that reaches 37.5 degrees centigrade.

According to Dr. Ho, other measures like drinking plenty of water, fresh fruit juice, or mild tea, taking a bath regularly, wearing comfortable clothes and using the right blankets while in an adequately ventilated room could also help manage fever.

Patients experiencing cough and sore throat are advised to take their prescribed medicines, drink plenty of water, and avoid exposure to allergy-inducing objects like pollen, dust, perfume, or animal hair. Sore throat may also be relieved by drinking herbal tea like ginger tea, gargling lukewarm with salt, or taking lozenges or cough drops.

The DOH reminded the public to seek urgent medical attention if their symptoms become severe, and they start experiencing difficulty in breathing, confusion, sleepiness, and blueing of lips or face. They could call the Barangay Health Emergency Response Team for immediate referral to the nearest health facility in their area or the Department’s 24/7 telemedicine hotlines: 02-8424-1724 or 02-7798-8000 for NCR, and 1555 and 894-COVID for those outside.