



Republic of the Philippines  
Department of Health  
**OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**

February 7, 2020

**DEPARTMENT MEMORANDUM**

No. 2020 - 0071

**TO: ALL UNDERSECRETARIES AND ASSISTANT SECRETARIES; DIRECTORS OF BUREAUS AND CENTERS FOR HEALTH DEVELOPMENT; MINISTER OF HEALTH – BANGSAMORO AUTONOMOUS REGION IN MUSLIM MINDANAO; EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS OF SPECIALTY HOSPITALS; CHIEFS OF MEDICAL CENTERS, HOSPITALS, SANITARIA AND INSTITUTES; AND OTHERS CONCERNED**

**SUBJECT: Interim Guidelines on the Activation of Five (5) DOH Subnational Laboratories for the 2019 Novel Coronavirus Acute Respiratory (2019-nCoV ARD) Response**

**I. BACKGROUND**

After a cluster of pneumonia cases of unknown etiology was reported in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China last December 31, 2019, Chinese health authorities preliminarily identified the cause of this viral pneumonia as a new or novel type of coronavirus (2019-nCoV).

With an increasing number of cases spreading to various territories and confirmed human-to-human transmission, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) last January 30, 2020.

In view of the need to augment confirmatory testing capacity, the Department of Health has sub-allotted funds to the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) to facilitate the activation of the following existing subnational laboratories:

1. San Lazaro Hospital (SLH);
2. Lung Center of the Philippines (LCP);
3. Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center (BGHMC);
4. Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center (VSMMC), in collaboration with the Armed Forces Research Institute of Medical Sciences (AFRIMS); and
5. Southern Philippines Medical Center (SPMC).

This issuance shall provide guidance to the five (5) Subnational Laboratories (SNLs) for the 2019-nCoV ARD response.

**GUIDELINES**

**A. Research Institute for Tropical Medicine shall:**

1. Evaluate the needed equipment and supplies (including reagents) of the SNLs;
2. Develop harmonized guidelines for infection control, biosafety and laboratory quality assurance for testing of 2019-nCoV ARD;

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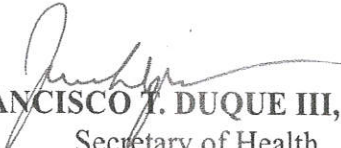
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3. Provide training and capability-building activities to the SNLs;
4. Develop criteria and framework for declaration of each SNL as operational and ready to respond;
5. Ensure proper and expeditious procurement of needed equipment and supplies;
6. Deploy purchased equipment and supplies to SNLs that are declared operational and ready to respond;
7. Implement a program of proficiency testing for the SNLs;
8. Conduct monitoring and evaluation activities over the SNL as appropriate;
9. Prepare and publish annual reports on the performance of the SNLs; and
10. Provide monthly Financial Utilization Report to the Finance Service, Department of Health, relative to sub-allotted funds for SNLs.

**B. Hospitals housing the DOH Subnational Laboratories shall:**

1. Facilitate development and approval, in collaboration with RITM, of the activation plan for the SNL within 1 week upon the release of this issuance;
2. Ensure that all requirements for operationalization of the SNL PCR facility are complied with within 2 weeks upon approval of the plan;
3. Ensure that human resources trained by RITM in each SNL are unloaded from other hospital/laboratory functions to be able to prioritize laboratory response to 2019-nCoV ARD;
4. Ensure adherence to available guidelines for 2019-nCoV ARD response, to avoid hospital-acquired/laboratory-acquired infections and/or generation of false positive/false negative results;
5. Coordinate with other SNLs as may be necessary and advantageous; and
6. Ensure the sustainability of the SNL operations.

For strict compliance of all concerned.

  
FRANCISCO T. DUQUE III, MD, MSc  
Secretary of Health

