

COVID-19 response in the Philippines: Novartis contributions

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- Novartis is taking concrete steps to help ensure sustained supply of essential life-saving medicines to patients and support the country's COVID-19 response led by the Department of Health (DOH).
- Novartis support focuses on protecting frontline health workers and supporting the expansion of treatment and testing capacity.

Makati City, June 25, 2020 – As the Philippines deals with the COVID-19 pandemic, Novartis Healthcare Philippines is taking concrete steps to help ensure sustained supply of essential life-saving medicines to patients and support the country's COVID-19 response led by the Department of Health (DOH).

“Our main thrust is to protect our frontline health workers and support the expansion of the country’s treatment and testing capacity,” said Jugo Tsumura, Country President & Managing Director, Novartis Healthcare Philippines.

To help expand the country’s COVID-19 testing capacity, Novartis donated PHP19.3M to the Philippine General Hospital (PGH) Medical Foundation for the purchase of locally-produced COVID-19 test kits.

“PGH is waging war on COVID-19. The Novartis support for COVID-19 testing is valuable intelligence in this war. PGH is the biggest COVID-19 referral hospital in the country. To date, PGH has served more than 600 COVID-19 patients and over 3,000 patients with COVID-19 related conditions,” said PGH Director and PGH Medical Foundation Inc. Board of Trustee member Dr. Gerardo Legaspi.

“The donation of Novartis is very important to us, and we are grateful to have Novartis as one of our partners in the war against COVID-19. I want to thank Novartis leadership team for making this donation possible. We look forward to our continuing partnership with Novartis,” said Dr. Carmencita Padilla, Chancellor, University of the Philippines Manila.

“The Novartis donation allows us to significantly step up our testing capacity both at the PGH and the NIH [National Institutes of Health]. To date, we have conducted 13,297 tests at the NIH which were made possible by the collective efforts of the PGH, the NIH, UP Manila and donors like Novartis who prioritize helping others during these extraordinarily trying times,” said NIH Executive Director Dr. Eva Maria Cutiongco-de la Paz.

“Pharmaceutical and biotech companies, including the Swiss company Novartis, are working hard not only to cater for the current needs and demand of drugs, but also to share their knowledge and foster partnerships with different government entities. Swiss companies support manifold public health, Corporate Social Responsibility and charity activities to help alleviate the plight of many. Switzerland is known for its humanitarian tradition and its companies for taking their societal responsibility at heart,” said His Excellency Alain Gaschen, Ambassador of Switzerland to the Philippines.

To support the country’s COVID-19 treatment capacity, Novartis and its generics and biosimilars division Sandoz donated a substantial volume of hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) to the Philippine Government in response to the DOH request for a potential treatment for about 1,000 hospitalized patients with moderate to severe COVID-19 .

Novartis has started the Ruxolitinib compassionate use program for COVID-19 patients in the Philippines. Pre-clinical and preliminary clinical evidence suggests Ruxolitinib, a well-established Janus kinase (JAK) inhibitor, could reduce the number of COVID-19 patients requiring intensive care and mechanical ventilation. On April 2, 2020 Novartis Global announced its plan to initiate a clinical study of Ruxolitinib in severe COVID-19 patients.

Sandoz is also donating a year's supply of medicines to the East Avenue Medical Center and other hospitals through the Philippine Red Cross, which will benefit almost 10,000 patients with infections and 6,000 patients with hypertension.

The Swiss-based company donated PHP500,000 worth of personal protective equipment (PPE) to PHAPCares Foundation for the benefit of frontline health workers in key COVID-19 referral hospitals.

To support the DOH COVID-19 response in the National Capital Region, Novartis Healthcare Philippines and Sandoz Philippines donated 8,800 pairs of gloves shared equally among Lung Center of the Philippines, National Kidney and Transplant Institute, Philippine General Hospital and Philippine Heart Center. Novartis also donated food packs to quarantined frontline healthcare workers of government hospitals, private hospitals and medical societies for five days.

To support the request for provision of PPEs to patient navigators and volunteer healthcare workers who continue to help cancer patients during the COVID-19 pandemic, Novartis donated P88,000.00 to ICANSERVE Foundation.

The Novartis initiatives in the Philippines are part of the company's global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the creation of a global USD 20 million fund to support impacted communities around the world.



To help expand the Philippine's COVID-19 testing capacity, Novartis donated PHP19,370,500.00 to the PGH Medical Foundation, Inc. for the purchase of locally-developed COVID-19 test kits. Photo shows participants during the official handover of the donation (from left:) Ms. Christine Fajardo, Country Corporate Affairs Head, Novartis; His Excellency Alain Gaschen, Swiss Ambassador to the Philippines; Mr. Jugo Tsumura, Country President, Novartis; Dr. Gerardo Legaspi, Director, Philippine General Hospital and Member, Board of Trustees, PGH Medical Foundation, Inc.; Dr. Carmencita Padilla, Chancellor, University of the Philippines Manila; and Dr. Eva Maria Cutiongco-de la Paz, Executive Director, National Institutes of Health.

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