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Philippines: COVID-19 cases shoot up by 82%, unvaccinated urged to get jabbed immediately

Tuesday 21 June 2022, by [MAGSAMBOL Bonz](#) (Date first published: 21 June 2022).

'We're definitely at the start of a new surge. It's too early to say when the peak will be,' says Dr. John Wong of public health research institution Epimetrics

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MANILA, Philippines - After months of recording low infections, COVID-19 cases climbed again by 82% from June 13 to 19, data from the Department of Health (DOH) showed.

In its weekly COVID-19 case bulletin released on Monday, June 20, the DOH tallied a total of 3,051 infections translating to 436 cases per day. This was a significant rise from 1,682 cases recorded from June 6 to 12, with 240 average cases per day.

The DOH said that as of Sunday, June 19, there were 554 critical and severe patients admitted to the hospitals due to COVID-19. Despite this, hospital utilization in the country remains at low risk.

'Vaccinate the unvaccinated'

In a text message to Rappler, Dr. John Wong of Epimetrics said the Philippines has had at least a week of continuous increase in seven-day moving average of COVID-19 cases.

"So, we're definitely at the start of a new surge. It's too early to say when the peak will be. Over the past few months, when cases were low, I've always said publicly that, without higher vaccination rates, we're just in between surges. So, this is it," said Wong.

[Graph from Epimetrics]

Epimetrics is a public health research institution focused on the achievement of health equity through rigorous and creative conception, execution, translation, and communication of health systems and policy research. It also helps the government make sense of the pandemic.

Wong said that although there was a "sharp rise" in COVID-19 infections, hospitalization and deaths remained low. This, according to him, was due to "infection- and vaccine-induced immunity and to the relative mildness of Omicron."

The spike in cases comes as the country detected cases of the highly infectious subvariants of Omicron.

“Even with Omicron, people are still getting hospitalized and dying and most of these are the unvaccinated. Actually, the more important message should be for the unvaccinated to get vaccinated. Boosting the unboosted will have less of an impact than vaccinating the unvaccinated,” Wong said.

In an interview with CNN Philippines on Monday morning, Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said the DOH was seeing a “continuously increasing (case rate) especially in the National Capital Region.”

The health official said the trend was similar to when the country started recording a spike in cases in September 2021 and January 2022 due to Delta and Omicron variants, respectively. Vergeire attributed the current increase in cases to the entry of Omicron subvariants, increased patterns of mobility, and the waning immunity due to the slow uptake of boosters.

Why this matters

If cases continue to rise in the coming months, the education sector would suffer a major setback as the Department of Education (DepEd) plans to transition all schools to in-person classes in August or the start of school year 2022 to 2023.

[PLAY VIDEO COVID-19 cases shoot up by 82%, unvaccinated urged to get jabbed immediately]

Vice President-elect and incoming Education Secretary Sara Duterte at a press conference on Monday said, “we are targeting that,” when asked if more face to face classes would be allowed in the new school year.

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