

# Cory back in hospital

by JOANNE RAE RAMIREZ  
Philstar.com

BARELY two months after undergoing laparo-scope surgery to excise a cancerous tumor from her colon, former President Corazon Aquino is back in hospital.

A close family friend who asked not to be named because he was not authorized to speak on Mrs. Aquino's health condition said the

former president was hospitalized due to loss of appetite.

He asked for prayers for her swift recovery, as Mrs. Aquino has always attributed her resiliency to the power of prayer.

The former president, 76, was diagnosed with colon cancer in March last year.

After undergoing chemotherapy, she underwent a two-and-a-half-

hour long laparoscopic surgery last May performed by a team headed by Paris-trained Dr. Catherine Peh and her mentor, Frenchman Joel Leroy at the Makati Medical Center in Makati City.

"The surgery was a success. They were able to take out the cancer-affected area entirely," Kris Aquino, the former president's youngest daughter, told The STAR in a telephone interview after the surgery. Kris Aquino recently said on television that the surgery was

followed by radiation therapy.

Sen. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III, told *The STAR* last May that his mother had at times felt she has led a full life and was "ready to go."

"But she promised all of us she will do everything to get well," Aquino III said.

"She was aware of her options and could have just opted for palliatives for a better quality of life. (But) she is a fighter," added the senator. ■



Former Pres. Corazon Aquino

## Will Arroyo go on 10-day quarantine?

by CHRISTIAN V. ESGUERRA  
Inquirer.net

WILL she or won't she? Only President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo knows for sure.

With the swine flu virus cutting a wide swath of infection worldwide, the government-required self-quarantine remains in place, according to Dr. Asuncion Anden, director of the National Center for Health Promotion.

But as to whether the peripatetic President will submit to the 10-day self-quarantine when she flies back to Manila this weekend, not even her deputy spokesperson was certain.

Gary Olivar, one of a number of persons serving as Ms Arroyo's mouthpieces, struggled to reply to a question on whether she would be covered by the protocol as a way of setting an example to the public.

"Only the President has a decisive voice on that particular decision," Olivar said at a media briefing last June 23.

He added: "I think the President



Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo

will behave responsibly, cognizant of her responsibilities to public health issues, to her office, and to those she serves."

The President is now in Brazil after a working visit to Japan.

### Self-observation

Even Anden declined to say whether Ms Arroyo would be required to stay in her quarters for 10 days when she returns.

"She would have to observe herself for any respiratory conditions, signs and symptoms," the

health official said at the same briefing. "I'm sure the President will be adequately briefed on this [matter]."

Anden also said Ms Arroyo should wash her hands after working a crowd—one of the anti-flu measures promoted by the Department of Health (DOH).

"It [should] not be taken as an affront [by the public] because that is exactly what the DOH is recommending for every individual," Anden said.

With the House of Representatives now laid low by the Influenza A(H1N1) virus, does Malacañang have a contingency plan of its own?

Olivar was visibly at a loss on the specifics of such a plan, or if the Palace indeed had one.

"We are following the lead of the DOH on this," he said. "I would assume that the situation here in Malacañang would be no different [from that] in other public buildings."

Anden said the DOH was not encouraging government agen-

cies to halt operations in case someone comes down with the virus.

She said sick employees were simply advised not to go to work and to seek medical treatment.

### Soap rare

While private companies and schools have embarked on an aggressive information campaign on the virus, nothing of the sort is going on in the Palace compound.

At the New Executive Building, for instance, soap or any type of sanitizer is a rarity in the toilets. Tissue paper or hand dryers are also unavailable.

Anden reiterated the DOH reminder for agencies—both private and public—to provide "ample supplies of soaps and sanitizers" in rest rooms. She said the public should continue to observe cough and sneeze manners.

Also visibly lacking in Malacañang are posters reminding the public how to deal with the virus, unlike neighboring schools where leaflets are distributed and help desks have been set up. ■

## RP flu cases hit 500-mark Hundreds being tested

by DONA PAZZIBUGAN  
Inquirer.net

HEALTH Secretary Francisco Duque III declared last June 23 a "low-level" community outbreak of the Influenza A(H1N1) virus in

certain parts of Metro Manila, as the number of confirmed cases neared the 500 mark. Hundreds more suspected cases are waiting to be officially tested.

Duque said the virus transmission had apparently gone beyond "third generation" in the communities where affected schools were located.

He mentioned Quezon City, Parañaque and Manila as sites of low-level community outbreak. These, along with Makati, have the highest number of swine flu cases based on the place of residence.

"We're there but it's low-level," Duque said at a news briefing when asked if a community-level transmission already existed after the Department of Health (DOH) confirmed 28 new cases that brought the total to 473.

A community-level outbreak is the fourth and highest level of transmission.

It is no longer possible to trace where the transmission started (called the index case) since the virus has spread beyond the close contacts (called the second transmission cases) and then to more contacts (called the third generation transmission cases).

Duque said the DOH had not observed a "sustained" community outbreak in Metro Manila.

### 7-month-old baby

Among the 28 new confirmed

cases yesterday was a 7-month-old Filipino infant who became the youngest infected person to date since the first case was detected on May 21.

Like the infant, all the rest of the new patients have not been abroad.

Duque said all the new cases were "mild" and were receiving treatment.

Health Undersecretary Mario Villaverde said the DOH could no longer distinguish if the new cases were second-generation or third-generation.

Since the very young and the elderly are among the high-risk groups, the DOH is giving special attention to the infant to ensure there will be no complications, according to Duque.

The country had its swine flu-related death in a 49-year-old mother with a preexisting chronic heart disease and various ailments. She died on June 19 just two days after the onset of flu symptoms.

In declaring a "low-level" community transmission in parts of Metro Manila, Duque said there was no clustering of cases.

"You can put it this way: where the schools are, you already have school-community transmission but still very limited in number," he said.

Duque said that "numbers-wise and percentage-wise" the situation was not alarming.

"When you're given 22 schools that are affected but we have schools between 40,000 and 60,000, that only represents a minuscule number of schools. And consider the total number of persons affected compared to the total population," he said.

Villaverde said the best thing to do when some of the cases were already third generation was "to shift to mitigation and to just look for those who are ill and treat them."

However, in areas where there are no or few confirmed cases so far, DOH field personnel will still do contact tracing to contain the further spread of the virus by advising household members to go into self quarantine.

### Much higher

Health authorities have conceded that the total cases in the country is much higher than those they have already confirmed, since the virus spreads much faster than authorities can perform the tests.

All specimens must go through the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) in Muntinlupa for confirmatory testing.

Because the number of people asking to be tested is increasing, the DOH is preparing San Lazaro Hospital in Manila and Vicent Sotto Memorial Medical Center in Cebu to take some of the load off the RITM.

The DOH estimated that the spread of the swine flu virus could be likened to the seasonal flu virus which infects about one out of five members in a household and seven to 10 persons in a medium-size community with a population of 1,000. ■



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## More OFWs abroad get A(H1N1)

THE Department of Foreign Affairs has monitored more overseas Filipino workers with Influenza A(H1N1), prompting DFA spokesman Ed Malaya to remind them to be more careful.

Last June 24, the DFA ordered the Philippine embassy in Riyadh to check on the condition of two Filipino nurses in Saudi Arabia who tested positive for the Influenza A(H1N1) virus and extend assistance to them.

A Filipino nurse at King Faisal Specialist Hospital in Riyadh was the first case of H1N1 infection in the kingdom on June 3. She was diagnosed about a week after she returned from vacation in the Philippines but has since recovered.

The second Filipina nurse who tested positive for the virus arrived at Riyadh's King Khaled International Airport via Cathay Pacific Flight 733 on June 13. She is being treated at King Fahd Medical City National Guard

Hospital.

In Singapore, two OFWs have tested positive for H1N1 out of the 168 confirmed cases based on the report of the Philippine Ambassador to Singapore and Singapore's Ministry of Health (MoH).

The embassy said a 36-year-old Filipina worker who returned from Manila on Philippine Airlines PR501 on June 8 is one of them.

The other case is a 27-year-old Filipino male who is also working in the city-state and manifested symptoms of infection on June 18.

"He went and stayed home for the rest of the day. Laboratory results confirmed his infection on the same day and he was admitted to CDC2 via a 993 ambulance at night," the MoH said.

On June 19, a 14-year-old member of the Philippine football team to the Asian Youth Games (AYG) also tested positive for influenza during a routine temperature check, resulting in the

postponement of games involving the team.

Members of the Philippine football team have been placed under quarantine at the Aloha resort for seven days since then.

In Hong Kong, two Filipinos are currently confined in a hospital after health authorities confirmed them as two new A(H1N1) cases.

Malaya said Filipino health and medical workers, particularly doctors and nurses overseas, should "take extra caution in taking care of themselves as they take care of others."

"The health workers are particularly more exposed to the virus as they are treating patients," Malaya told the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* in an interview.

"So we've asked Philippine Ambassador to Riyadh Antonio Villamor as well as other posts to always remind our health workers to take extra caution," he added. (*Inquirer.net*)