

COVID-19 response in the Philippines: Novartis and Sandoz contributions

May 22, 2020

- 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).
- Novartis support focuses on protecting frontline health workers and supporting the expansion of treatment and testing capacity.

Makati City, May 22, 2020 – As the Philippines deals with the COVID-19 pandemic, Novartis Healthcare Philippines and Sandoz Philippines are 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, President & Managing Director, Novartis Healthcare Philippines.

“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 help expand the country’s COVID-19 testing capacity, Novartis donated PHP19.3M to the PGH Medical Foundation for the purchase of locally-produced COVID-19 test kits. 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. Novartis Global plans to initiate a clinical study of Ruxolitinib in severe COVID-19 patients.

Sandoz is donating medicines to East Avenue Medical Center and the Philippine Red Cross, which can support close to 6,000 patients with hypertension and 10,000 patients with infections for a year.

Novartis 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.

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.

The Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) has understandably posed mobility restrictions to Filipinos who wish to purchase medicines in retail drugstores. To help address this challenge, Novartis is providing alternative access for patients' medicines. The company has partnered with GBSL, a subsidiary of Zuellig Pharma Corp, to provide direct delivery of medicines to patients nationwide at no extra cost for patients. As part of the company's patient support program, Novartis has also partnered with MedGrocer to provide home delivery of patients' medicines.

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