

Good News
Department of Labor and Employment
Bureau of Working Conditions
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TB Platforms Project, BWC launched TB-COVID-19 prevention Webinar

To continue the information dissemination and ensure strict compliance of establishments on workplace Tuberculosis (TB) prevention and control in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the University Research Co., LLC (URC) in coordination with the Department of Labor and Employment through the Bureau of Working Conditions (DOLE-BWC) and the Department of Health-Center for Health Development-Metro Manila (DOH-CHD-MM) presented the webinar on Infection Prevention and Control for TB amidst COVID-19; and orientation on Workplace TB policy via ZOOM Videoconferencing.

According to the Executive Order No. 187 series of 2003 or the “Instituting A Comprehensive and Unified Policy for the Tuberculosis Control in the Philippines,” in 1998, TB ranked sixth in the 10 leading causes of death and illness in the Philippines. In a report from World Health Organization (WHO), the Philippines had the highest TB incidence in Asia in 2019, with 554 cases per 100,000 people, and about one (1) million Filipinos have active TB disease and it still remains as one of the major public health problems in the country.

“TB disease is endemic in the country primarily because of low detection rate, high population density, [patients’] preference for traditional healers, drug discontinuation, and before, selling of TB meds provided by *DOH* prompting the creation of DOTS or Direct Observe Treatment System, [*kung saan*] *lulunukin mo [‘yung] gamot sa in front of the health worker*” (“[wherein] the patients have to take the medicine while being observed by the health worker”), stated by Dr. Felix Labanda Jr., one of the presenters in the webinar.

On the notable challenges encountered in TB prevention and control during this time of the pandemic, Dr. Labanda stated that because the country was placed under community quarantine, access to DOTS Centers have been more challenging. Additionally, the GeneXpert, a diagnostic test used for TB has been diverted to diagnose COVID-19, making it more difficult to tend to TB infection.

With the continuing prevalence of TB infection and with the COVID-19 pandemic, the URC launched the TB Platform for Sustainable Treatment, Detection, Care and Treatment Project or TB Platforms Project to support the National Tuberculosis Program

(NTP) in the country and to reinforce TB interventions and boost prevention and treatment success.

The webinar, organized by the URC-led TB Platforms Project in partnership with the DOLE-BWC, intends to increase knowledge and strengthen preventive measures on TB and COVID-19 in the Philippines; and provide updates and orientation on workplace TB policy in accordance to the Department Order No. 73 series of 2005 or “Guidelines for the Implementation of Policy and Program on TB Prevention and Control in the Workplace”, in the new normal setup.

Pursuant to the EO No. 187-03, the DOLE promulgated the DO 73-05 where all establishments, workplaces and worksites in the private sector are mandated to “formulate and implement a TB prevention and control policy and program.”

“[These] TB webinars are essential to strengthen the establishments' compliance to the DOLE DO 73-05 by increasing awareness,” Dr. Labanda added.

The program was scheduled to be running on the 2nd, 5th, 8th, 30th, and 31st of October with participants from the selected private companies in the cities of Malabon, Valenzuela, Parañaque, Manila, and Caloocan, respectively.

-AJRB