



**Support the DOH Vaccination Campaign Against Polio:
An Urgent Appeal to the Pediatricians
from the
Philippine Pediatric Society
and the
Pediatric Infectious Disease Society of the Philippines**



Last February 15, 2020, the Department of Health (DOH) confirmed that another case of acute flaccid paralysis due to cVDPV2 was found in Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija. This brings the total number of recent polio cases in the Philippines to 17, of which 2 were caused by VDPV1 and 15 by VDPV2. Likewise, the latest report revealed that an environmental sample taken from Butuanon River in Cebu tested positive for the poliovirus, bringing the total number of environmental VDPV isolates to 30 as of February 19, 2020.¹

As poliovirus continues to circulate in the Philippines and pose a risk to our vulnerable population, the Department of Health has been vigorously implementing a comprehensive polio outbreak response, including supplemental immunization activities in select areas of the country. Synchronized polio immunization campaigns (Sabayang Patak Contra Polio) using multiple rounds of bOPV containing serotypes 1 and 3 and mOPV2 containing serotype 2 alone have been rolled out since October 2019.^{2,3} The following table, lifted from the latest UNICEF-WHO Philippines Polio Outbreak Situation Report, summarizes recent, ongoing and future immunization campaign activities of the DOH:

Table 1: Details of recent, ongoing and upcoming vaccination campaigns

When	What	Where	Who	#
6-12 Jan 2020	bOPV	BaSulTa*/Zamboanga, Isabella/Lambayong	<10	705,089
17 Feb-1 Mar 2020	bOPV	BaSulTa/Zamboanga, Isabella/Lambayong	<10	739,640
	bOPV	Rest of Regions IX/XII/BARMM and rest of Mindanao	<5	3 million
23 Mar-4 Apr 2020	bOPV	BaSulTa/Zamboanga, Isabella/Lambayong	<10	739,640
	bOPV	Rest of Regions IX/XII/BARMM and rest of Mindanao	<5	3 million
20 Jan-2 Feb 2020	mOPV2	Mindanao	<5	3,057,875
27 Jan-7 Feb 2020	mOPV2	NCR	<5	1.4 million
24 Feb-8 Mar 2020	mOPV2	NCR	<5	1.4 million

* Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi

Polio has no definite cure; however, it is VACCINE PREVENTABLE. Completing the primary series of inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) protects our children against polio paralysis, but providing oral polio vaccine (OPV) further augments protection by boosting intestinal immunity and preventing person-to-person spread of the virus. This protects not only the vaccine recipient, but the community as well.⁴ During mass immunization campaigns, vaccinating every child, regardless of previous vaccine doses received (IPV and/or OPV), will catch those who are either unimmunized or only partially protected, and boost immunity of those who have been previously immunized. As vaccination provides protection to all susceptible children, the virus will eventually die out if no vulnerable host is encountered.^{5,6}

In contrast to the previous campaigns which distributed bivalent OPV (bOPV) containing serotypes 1 and 3, the upcoming oral polio vaccination campaigns will provide monovalent OPV

with serotype 2 (mOPV2), which is in short supply globally and is only available through the DOH. This will protect specifically against the cVDPV2 that has been most frequently isolated.

We call on all pediatricians and health care providers (HCPs) to support the DOH campaign against polio, an outbreak which has been declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).

Pediatricians and HCPs must:

1. **Counsel parents on the importance of having their child receive the supplemental OPV (bOPV and mOPV2) doses currently being provided by the DOH in Metro Manila and the National Capital Region, regardless of previous polio vaccinations received. Emphasize that vaccination is the best protection for their children against polio, and additional vaccination means additional protection.**
2. Urge parents to cooperate with the DOH team during immunization activities in the community. This ensures that the DOH will be successful in reaching 100% of their immunization target.
3. Educate parents to adopt hygienic practices at home: frequent handwashing, consumption of clean water and adequately cooked food, proper use of the toilet, and proper waste disposal.
4. **Immediately report all Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP) cases or cases with acute onset of paralytic illness in your area of practice to your designated surveillance officer.**

LET US NOT LEAVE ANY CHILD BEHIND! LET US STOP POLIO TRANSMISSION!

Support the government's immunization campaign to ensure that every Filipino child is protected and that no child should suffer from paralytic poliomyelitis.

References

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