



PHILIPPINE SOCIETY OF PATHOLOGISTS, INC.

## **PSP Statement on the Use of RT-PCR Kits for Detection of SARS-CoV-2 Variants of Concern**

The **Philippine Society of Pathologists Inc.**, whose members are at the forefront of SARS-CoV-2 testing responses to the pandemic, views with concern the ongoing surge in cases which are being attributed to the spread of the Delta variant of concern (VOC).

The PSP wishes to assist in the identification of VOC particularly with regards to correlation with clinical findings when we are allowed to screen for VOC alongside with regular SARS-CoV-2 testing. We need to understand especially those breakthrough cases that become critically ill if these are due to variant infection.

However, the current situation is unclear due to the limitations of the Philippine Genome Center (PGC) to pursue more widespread testing for VOC due to many reasons. Hence, sampling of cases for genomic testing to detect VOC is very limited and may be subject to sampling errors. This is not to cast aspersions or allegations against the PGC which has more than enough work to do as it stands.

The knowledge gained with this approach can better assist our clinicians in the way they will manage cases and the LGUs in conducting more active surveillance. It will also enable us to better understand if the VOC have an effect on vaccine efficacy.

There are now several RT-PCR variant detection kits on the market which may enable us to detect VOC while doing regular SARS-CoV-2 testing. These kits, though labeled as “screens” show good concordance with sequencing data and therefore should be of use in our VOC testing. These novel COVID-19 technologies do not require additional inputs in terms of equipment, personnel or space and can be used in currently licensed molecular labs performing SARS-CoV-2 testing. They will greatly assist the PGC in terms of VOC detection given the opportunity to be used.

Hence, we are humbly requesting that these VOC SARS-CoV-2 kits be fast tracked for Emergency Use Approval by the FDA based on certification/approval of other countries for its use as a supplement to the testing being done for VOC. Once given EUA, there should be guidelines as well for the use of VOC RT-PCR as part of the national testing strategy.

As always, the Philippine Society of Pathologists Inc. stands ready to assist in whatever way it can to manage, control and prevent further spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in the country.

For the Philippine Society of Pathologists, Inc.:



**Roberto D. Padua Jr., MD, FPSP, MHA**  
*President, Philippine Society of Pathologists, Inc.*

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