



**World Health
Organization**

Western Pacific
Philippines

PH Solidarity trial for COVID-19 treatments receives green light from ethics review body

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The Department of Health (DOH) today announced that the participation of the Philippines to the WHO Solidarity trial has been approved by the Single Joint Research Ethics Board (SJREB) last April 17, in support of the COVID-19 global response.

This is in response to the World Health Organization's (WHO) launch of an international randomized and adaptive clinical trial "Solidarity" to test the safety and effectiveness of four possible therapies in treating COVID-19, compared to standard of care: the investigational antiviral Remdesivir, antimalarial drug Chloroquine or Hydroxychloroquine, antiretroviral drugs used to treat HIV Lopinavir with Ritonavir, and Lopinavir with Ritonavir plus Interferon beta-1a, last March 13, 2020. More than 100 countries have joined the Solidarity trial with more than 1,200 patients randomized from the first five countries, to evaluate the safety and efficacy of four drugs and drug combinations.

The Philippine representatives to the WHO Solidarity clinical trial is led by Dr Marissa Alejandria of the University of the Philippines College of Medicine and President of the Philippine Society for Microbiology and Infectious Diseases, in close collaboration with the DOH and the WHO. OIC-Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire will serve as the Department's official liaison for the DOH. It will be conducted in at least 20 Level 3 hospitals nationwide. SJREB is a level 3 Philippine Health Research Ethics Board (PHREB) accredited research ethics committee which conducts joint review of study protocols for at least three (3) sites in the Philippines. Level 3 accreditation means that the SJREB can review all types of research, including clinical drug trials. The board is composed of seven permanent members and site representatives.

“There is currently no magic drug or known treatment for COVID-19 and there is an urgency to find effective treatment,” explained the U.S. Sec. Vergeire. The drugs included in this trial are largely untested against SARS-COV 2 virus that causes COVID-19, and more robust data is needed. “We are optimistic that this megatrial, with over 90 participating countries, will promote the rapid generation of strong evidence for treating COVID-19, and ultimately stem this pandemic,” the Health Spokesperson concluded.

“We are glad to partner with the Philippines and other countries around the world to help find an effective treatment for COVID-19. The more countries that will be participating in the Solidarity trial, the quicker we will see results,” said WHO acting representatives Dr Socorro Escalante and Dr Tauhid Islam. “We share the optimism of the DOH as we move forward with the Solidarity trial. Let us continue to work together to beat COVID-19.”