



Republic of the Philippines
Department of Health
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

January 11, 2022

DEPARTMENT CIRCULAR

No. 2021 - 0374-A

TO: ALL UNDERSECRETARIES; ASSISTANT SECRETARIES; DIRECTORS OF BUREAUS, CENTERS FOR HEALTH DEVELOPMENT AND SERVICES; EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS OF SPECIALTY HOSPITALS, AND NATIONAL NUTRITION COUNCIL; CHIEFS OF MEDICAL CENTERS, HOSPITALS, SANITARIA AND INSTITUTES; PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINE HEALTH INSURANCE CORPORATION; DIRECTORS OF PHILIPPINE NATIONAL AIDS COUNCIL AND TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION CENTERS; AND OTHERS CONCERNED

SUBJECT: Amendment of Department Circular No. 2021 - 0374 entitled "Price Cap for COVID-19 Reverse Transcription – Polymerase Reaction (RT-PCR) Testing"

The Department Circular No. 2021 - 0374 entitled "*Price Cap for COVID-19 Reverse Transcription – Polymerase Reaction (RT-PCR) Testing*" dated 26 August 2021 is hereby amended to clarify or amend the following:

1. Turnaround Time for COVID-19 RT-PCR Tests

- a. Rapid communication of laboratory results to clients and health authorities shall be the paramount mandate of all COVID-19 laboratories to support the clinical management of COVID-19 cases, planning of public health response activities, and implementing outbreak control interventions.
- b. COVID-19 laboratories are mandated to observe 24-48 hours Turn-Around-Time (TAT) of laboratory results from receipt of specimens to release to clients. Therefore, no additional fees, or other payment shall be charged for laboratory results issued within the prescribed 24-48 hours TAT.

2. Price Cap for Private COVID-19 Laboratories

To minimize confusion among the public, the statement “(with 20% allowable markup)” is removed under the Private Price Cap for the Cost of Procedure:

		PLATE-BASED	GENEXPERT (CARTRIDGE-BASED)
PUBLIC	Price Cap for Cost of Procedure^{1,2}	Php 2,800.00	Php 2,450.00
PRIVATE	Price Cap for Cost of Procedure^{1,2}	Php 3,360.00	Php 2,940.00

The price caps are reflective of the costs associated with the conduct of a test.

3. Scope and Applicability of the Price Cap

- a. The price caps stated in this issuance shall apply to all public and private DOH-licensed COVID-19 testing laboratories and to its third - party specimen collectors
- b. The set price caps shall also apply to private insurance companies, and other public and private entities which pay and provide testing services.
- c. Testing laboratories offering drive-through services *within* the premises of their property shall comply with the aforementioned price caps.
- d. The prices are inclusive of value-added tax (VAT).
- e. Reimbursement based on PhilHealth benefit packages for plate-based (PhilHealth Circular No. 2021-001) and cartridge-based PCR (PhilHealth Circular No. 2021-003) are still in effect. No other fees shall be charged on top of Philhealth reimbursements.
- f. Testing kits and supplies donated or subsidized by the government shall not be charged to clients or included in the price of testing services.

4. Price Cap for Offsite Services

This amendment also hereby changes the scope of “Home Service” to “Off-site Services”:

From:

	PLATE-BASED	GENEXPERT (CARTRIDGE-BASED)
Price Cap for Home Service^{1,2}	Php 1,000.00	Php 1,000.00

To:

	PLATE-BASED	GENEXPERT (CARTRIDGE-BASED)
Price Cap for Off-site^a Services^b	Php 1,000.00	Php 1,000.00

- a. Off-site is defined as any venue outside the premises or compound where the DOH-licensed COVID-19 testing laboratory is located.
- b. *Off-site services* include home services, remote collection, specimen collection sites by third-party providers, and any other offsite activities conducted outside the premises or compound of the DOH-licensed COVID-19 testing laboratory
- c. All third-party specimen collectors shall have a valid Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with a licensed COVID-19 testing laboratory, which shall be accountable for all the activities.
- d. Drive-through services which are done by DOH-recognized third party service providers or by laboratories outside their compound/vicinity are also included as off-site services. However, drive-through services within the premises of the laboratory or compound are excluded from the scope of off-site services.
- e. A maximum amount of Php 1,000.00 is allowed to be charged on top of the existing cost of the procedure in rendering off-site services. This amount shall be charged on a per-visit and per-venue basis, regardless of the number of tests conducted and the number of individuals tested on the site.
- f. Except for the off-site services provided herein, no additional fees, or other payments shall be charged for other premium services.
- g. The DOH-licensed COVID-19 Testing Laboratory shall be responsible for ensuring adherence to the price caps for off-site services through their

arrangements with third-party collection agents and shall be held liable for violations of this circular and other related issuances.

5. Reiteration on the Guidelines for Remote Collection

- a. Remote collection for off-site services shall follow the guidelines stipulated in the following issuances:
 - i. Department Circular No. 2020-0319 - *Guidelines for the Remote Specimen Collection for SARS-CoV- 2 Detection Conducted by the COVID-19 Testing Laboratories*
 - ii. Department Circular No. 2020-0367 - *Reiteration and Clarification of Department Memorandum (DM) No. 2020-0324 titled Mandatory Notification of Remote Collection Activity of COVID-19 Testing Laboratories*
 - iii. Department Circular No. 2020-0383 - *Advisory on Health Facilities Offering COVID-19 Testing Services*


The abovementioned guidelines are attached to this issuance, for guidance.

6. Reporting of Overpriced COVID-19 RT-PCR Tests

- a. Complaints on laboratories, hospitals, and other facilities that charge prices exceeding the price cap must be reported and submitted to the Health Facilities and Services Regulatory Bureau - Complaints Action Unit (HFSRB-CAU). To report, concerned persons may contact the HFSRB-CAU at hfsrb.cau@doh.gov.ph or at 8651-7800 local 2527, 2500-2503.

All other provisions of Department Circular No. 2021 - 0374 not affected by this Order shall be retained and remain in effect.

This Order shall take effect immediately, and shall remain in effect until lifted.


FRANCISCO T. DUQUE III, MD, MSc
Secretary of Health