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Locked-down Cebu sitio can explore use of rapid COVID-19 tests – expert

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2-3 minutes

Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, April 17) — A health expert on Friday said the sub-village in Cebu City where [everyone is presumed to be infected](#) can opt to use rapid COVID-19 test kits instead of completely scrapping the testing procedure.

Despite the widespread transmission of COVID-19 in Sitio Zapatera in Barangay Luz, the Department of Health in Central Visayas sees no need to conduct COVID-19 mass testing for the sub-village's 9,000 residents. It instead opted to totally isolate the congested community, which it deemed as "contaminated."

Dr. Ted Herbosa, special adviser of the National Task Force Against COVID-19, said the decision of local health officials is understandable, but he urged them to explore other options.

"When you already have a widespread community transmission, testing everybody becomes too tedious... Another approach, which the President already endorsed, is in a community like that when there [are] already many cases, is to do rapid antibody tests," he told CNN Philippines' New Day.

The rapid antibody tests produce results in a couple of hours

compared to the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing, which has a turnaround time of up to a week. But the Health Department warned the rapid antibody tests may not give accurate results on whether a patient has coronavirus disease or not.

President Rodrigo Duterte has ordered the purchase of 2 million rapid antibody test kits, urging the Health Department to fast track the guidelines for its usage.

As of Thursday, Sitio Zapatera has recorded 53 confirmed cases, including 9-month-old twins, with most of the patients either asymptomatic or showing mild flu-like symptoms. This accounts for nearly 70 percent of Cebu City's total number of cases, which is at 77.

Local health authorities warned there has been "sustained community transmission" in the sub-village since its first COVID-positive patient was detected on April 7. The area was placed under total lockdown on the same day.