



Republic of the Philippines  
Health Technology Assessment  
Department of Health

## HTAC RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS ON WASTAGE OF COVID-19 VACCINES 25 NOVEMBER 2022

The Health Technology Assessment Council (HTAC) issued a statement to respond to allegations that HTAC should be blamed for the wastage of COVID-19 vaccines. Vaccine wastage can be attributed to (1) non-use of vaccines because of public hesitancy and logistical problems, (2) over estimation in procurement due to inappropriate assumptions, and (3) misunderstanding of public and private sector on the logistic mobilization. Management of these processes, vaccine procurement negotiations, pricing, purchasing decisions of the private sector, planning, forecasting, and deployment of COVID-19 vaccines are not handled nor controlled by the HTAC.

The HTAC recommendation guides the Department of Health (DOH) and the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) in financing decisions for procuring health technologies. The HTAC submits its recommendations to the Secretary of Health for the final decision on implementation. HTAC recommendations are based on a thorough appraisal of scientific evidence, including an assessment of the safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines. To ensure safety and efficacy, an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for the COVID-19 vaccine issued by the Philippine Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is required before the HTAC can provide its final recommendation.

The HTAC has never been a cause of delay in the implementation of COVID-19 vaccine boosters. In fact, the HTAC released its recommendation on the *first boosters* which was approved by the Secretary of Health on 03 November 2021. The HTAC also submitted its findings on *second boosters* for the immunocompromised populations (ICPs), healthcare workers (HCWs) and senior citizens aged 60 years and above on 28 April 2022 following the release of the FDA EUA on 13 April 2022 and the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendation. In addition, when the Philippine FDA released EUA updates on 25 July 2022 to expand the age groups covered by second boosters to include adults aged 50 years old and above and adults aged 18-49 years old with comorbidities, the HTAC promptly released its updated recommendation the next day.

The expiration of COVID-19 vaccines is not a sound reason for HTAC to rashly recommend second boosters. Based on HTAC's review of the evidence, better outcomes are expected if first boosters are given to a greater proportion of the population; thus, the HTAC recommended that the campaign for first boosters be strengthened, considering the low uptake. The HTAC is always open to changes in support of its mandate. Just like all Filipinos, the HTAC wants what is best and safe for our people.

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2. Vice Chair and Citizen's Representative - Annabelle R. Borromeo, PhD, MHA, RN, CNS
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#### SC on Other Health Technologies

1. Iris Thiele Isip Tan, MD, MSc, FPCP, FPSEM
2. Raymond Francis R. Sarmiento, M.D.
3. Josefina Angeles Tuazon, RN, MN, DrPH

*\*Included in the ongoing call for the new set of HTAC members*