

# Philippines - Nurses in diapers: General Santos hospital workers look for jobs elsewhere

Wednesday 15 September 2021, by [REBOLLIDO Rommel](#) (Date first published: 15 September 2021).

**(1<sup>st</sup> UPDATE) To cut down on PPE costs, the nurses were asked to wear adult diapers and work for 12 hours per shift in a COVID-19 facility.**

Many nurses at the city hall-run Dr. Jorge P. Royeca Memorial Hospital (DJPRMH) have left and found work elsewhere due to pressures and poor working conditions amid the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in the city.

The straw that broke the camel's back was when they were made to put on personal protective suits for hours without toilet breaks while attending to critical patients in a COVID-19 facility.

To cut down on personal protective equipment (PPE) costs, they were asked to wear adult diapers and work for 12 hours per shift, nurses told Rappler.

They said the environment in the hospital's COVID-19 facility was unbearable that many quit and looked for work elsewhere.

"Puwede naman pagaanin ang trabaho, say four or six hours, pero sayang daw 'yung disposable PPE at mahal," said one nurse on Monday, September 13.

*(They could have eased our work load by reducing the working time, say four or six hours, but they said the PPEs were expensive.)*

Each PPE costs from P2,500 (\$50.11) to P3,000 (\$60.13), and once a health worker in a COVID-19 facility takes it off, he or she cannot put it on again.

The DJPRMH's COVID-19 facility has 26 remaining nurses working in shifts, down from 48 in previous months.

Nurses said they were instructed to wear the PPEs during their 12-hour shift inside the COVID-19 facility.

They said they were also required to stay in the hospital for 12 days, plus a seven-day quarantine period before they were given the clearance to go home and take a week-long rest.

At least eight of them recently left and have since transferred to a municipal hospital in nearby Sarangani province "where work conditions and the pay were much better."

Dr. Ryan Aplicador, head of the DJPRMH, has yet to respond to a query about the diaper

requirement and the nurses' working conditions. This story will be updated once he does.

However, Aplicador turned to Facebook on September 15 and challenged nurse sources to talk to him, not to Rappler. He also said the report had "malicious content" and "malicious intent."

But during a meeting of the local health board a week earlier, Aplicador said he understood the nurses because, like everyone, they too need to rest, and they were risking infection as well.

The DJPRMH is not the only hospital with manpower problems in General Santos and elsewhere, said Antonio Veneracion, chief executive officer of the Saint Elizabeth Hospital, which sent a team of nurses to augment frontline health workers in the national capital at the start of the pandemic in 2020.

With the recent surge in COVID-19 cases in General Santos City, Veneracion said, they had to send nurses from the hospital's regular wards to its COVID-19 facility.

"At our COVID-19 wing, each nurse attends to three patients. With the increasing number of COVID-19 patients, we were compelled to move more nurses to the facility," he said.

Veneracion, however, said that as the hospital expanded its capacity to admit more COVID-19 patients, the lack of nurses and other healthcare workers became more pronounced.

He said hospital resources and supplies, including tanks of life-saving medical oxygen, were also thinning.

Saint Elizabeth Hospital has waitlisted at least 40 people with COVID-19 queueing for hospital bed vacancies as of Monday, September 13.

General Santos logged 144 new COVID-19 infections on Monday, the third time this month that the city registered three-digit figures in a single day.

## **Rommel Rebolledo**

US\$1 = P49.88

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- Rappler.com. Sep 15, 2021 9:57 AM PHT:  
<https://www.rappler.com/nation/nurses-in-diapers-general-santos-hospital-workers-look-for-work-elsewhere>
- Rommel Rebolledo is a Mindanao-based journalist and an awardee of the Aries Rufo Journalism Fellowship