

# Nine doctors die from coronavirus in Philippines

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Nine doctors have died in the Philippines from the coronavirus, the country's top medical association said Thursday, as hospitals were overwhelmed and medics complained about a lack of protection on the frontlines.

The announcement of the doctors' deaths heightened fears that the scale of the health crisis in the Philippines is much worse than is being officially reported, with the confirmed virus death toll at just 38.

The main island of Luzon, home to 55 million people, is in the second week of a lockdown to contain the spread of the disease, but medics are warning there has been a surge in cases.

The Philippine Medical Association said a ninth doctor had died of the virus, and that health workers were not getting enough protection.

"If it were up to me, test the frontliners first and test them again after seven days. Doctors could be carriers themselves," the association's vice president Benito Atienza told AFP.

Three large Manila hospitals announced Wednesday they had reached full capacity and would no longer accept new coronavirus cases.

Hundreds of medical staff are also no longer treating patients because they are undergoing 14-day self-quarantines after suspected exposure.

"Unless we are able to move the new patients to other hospitals, our healthcare delivery system is going to break down," Medical City said in a statement.

The hospital added that patients suspected of having the virus were queuing up for space in intensive care, while more than 130 staff members were in isolation.

Makati Med, which has so far seen around 700 cases, said a number of its frontline physicians and nurses were being treated.

"As such, we can no longer extend the same degree of care and attention for any additional admission for COVID-19 cases," it added.

Just under 2,000 people had been tested for the virus nationwide as of Tuesday.

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