

Pregnant moms with COVID at higher risk of dying

By Patricia B. Mirasol

PREGNANT WOMEN with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) face increased odds of maternal death, admission to intensive care, and cesarean section deliveries.

Clinical recommendations for this patient group include vaccination, as well as home care for those with mild to moderate symptoms, according to medical experts in a recent webinar organized by the World Health Organization (WHO).

There is no contraindication for COVID-19 vaccination among pregnant women, said Dr. Michelle Giles, an Australia-based infectious diseases physician who specializes in managing infections in pregnancy and gynecology. "There is an abundance of safety data. [Getting vaccinated] is strongly recommended for pregnant women."

She added that many countries recommend booster doses for women who have received two doses.

HOME-BASED CARE

Home-based care for mild and

moderate cases during and after pregnancy is possible for pregnant women with COVID-19.

"We see an increased need for home-based care to minimize the risk of transmission," said Dr. Priya Soma-Pillay, a South Africa-based maternal and fetal medicine sub-specialist with an interest in high-risk obstetrics.

A pregnant patient is suitable for home care if: she has mild to moderate COVID-19; if trained healthcare workers are able to monitor her progress; if she able to adhere to restrictions around the home; if she has a support

network (a spouse, caregiver, or similar) who know how to prevent home transmission; if there is a line of communication between the patient and trained healthcare workers; and if her home has access to hygiene supplies and is able to manage waste properly.

"Before the decision is made for home-based care, a clinical picture of the patient needs to be made," said Dr. Soma-Pillay at the same event.

Healthcare workers have to wear standard PPE (personal protective equipment) of gloves, surgical mask, and apron in the routine

care of pregnant COVID-19 patients at home. If a home delivery is anticipated, then a full PPE of gloves, gown, hair cover, N95 ventilator, and goggles is necessary.

Antipyretics (or fever reducers) may be given for pain and fever, Dr. Soma-Pillay said, with antibiotics to be given for bacterial infection.

RECOMMENDED TREATMENT

Systemic corticosteroids are also recommended for patients with severe to critical COVID-19. This type of drug provides relief for inflamed areas of the body.

"For women with mild or moderate COVID-19, the benefits of antenatal [before birth] corticosteroid might outweigh the risks of potential harm to the mother," said Beverly Hunt, a UK-based professor of Thrombosis & Haemostasis at King's College London, and a specialist in thrombosis and acquired bleeding disorders.

FULL STORY

Read the full story by scanning the QR code with your smartphone or by typing the link bit.ly/Pregnant011922

OPINION

A new level of vaccine innovation

With the widespread impact of the various variants of concern, including Omicron, the World Health Organization (WHO) continues to assess the strain composition of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccines, and urges vaccine manufacturers to generate data on the breadth and magnitude of immune response for monovalent and multivalent vaccines.

In an interim statement released last week, the WHO Technical Advisory Group on COVID-19 Vaccine Composition said that COVID-19 vaccines that have high impact on prevention of infection and transmission as well as the prevention of severe disease and death are needed and should be developed. The global health agency added that until such vaccines are available, "the composition of current COVID-19 vaccines may need to be updated to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines continue to provide WHO-level recommended levels of protection against the various variants of concern."

Since the pandemic began, the WHO has named five variants of concern namely Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, and Omicron.

Member companies of the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Associations (IFPMA) are at the forefront of the global effort to develop safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines. Vaccine candidates of AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson, Moderna, and Pfizer (co-developed with BioNTech) were among the first to receive emergency use authorization (EUA) from regulatory authorities.

With extensive knowledge on earlier variants, the industry is once again scanning their libraries of vaccines and treatments to determine if they could provide protection against Omicron. Vaccine developers have earlier announced efforts to specifically target Omicron.

Most recent to announce its preliminary analysis was AstraZeneca which said that data from an ongoing trial showed increased antibody response against Delta, Alpha, and Gamma variants following a third dose of its vaccine. Another analysis of samples from the trial also showed higher antibody response to the Omicron variant.

Johnson & Johnson, on Jan. 6, announced that its vaccine demonstrated durable protection against breakthrough infection, hospitalization, and admission in the Intensive Care Unit for up to six months. Preliminary data from another study also demonstrated 85% effectiveness for the homologous booster shot of Johnson & Johnson against COVID-19 related hospitalization in South Africa where Omicron was dominant.

On Jan. 3, Pfizer-BioNTech also said that the US Food and Drug Administration expanded the EUA of a booster dose of its vaccine to include individuals 12 years old and older. It added that the reduction of time between the primary series from six months to five months is supported by real-world data from the Ministry of Health of Israel.

On Dec. 20, 2021, Moderna said that its currently authorized booster increased neutralizing antibody levels against Omicron approximately 37-fold compared to pre-boost levels.

Combined with public health and social measures such as wearing masks, hand hygiene,

and social distancing, among others, these COVID-19 vaccines have been crucial in preventing severe sickness and deaths, and protecting the health system.

On top of scaling up manufacturing to ensure equitable access to first-generation COVID-19 vaccines around the world, the research-based biopharmaceutical industry is working on new and next-generation vaccine candidates that could help address the pandemic. Vaccines are considered "next-generation" if these demonstrate an incremental improvement on the first-generation COVID-19 vaccines in terms of efficacy, affordability, and/or program feasibility (ease by which the vaccines are delivered into the arms of people around the world).

Toward this end, vaccine manufacturers are working on the development of protein-based vaccines for COVID-19, and are exploring new or different adjuvants as well as new components for stronger immune protection against SARS-CoV-2.

The challenge to the biopharmaceutical industry continues as the world seeks to end the pandemic at the soonest possible time. The

approaches and options outlined by the WHO require consideration of continued development of a monovalent vaccine that elicits an immune response against the predominant circulating variant. Another option, the WHO said, is the development of a multivalent vaccine containing antigens from different variants of concern. The ultimate challenge is the development of a pan SARS-CoV-2 vaccine that would be variant-proof.

The development of any such vaccines is not an easy task, and one which requires a new level of innovation and collaboration of the global scientific community.

TEODORO B. PADILLA is the executive director of the Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Association of the Philippines (PHAP), which represents the biopharmaceutical medicines and vaccines industry in the country. Its members are at the forefront of research and development efforts for COVID-19 and other diseases that affect Filipinos.



MEDICINE CABINET TEODORO B. PADILLA

Coca-Cola Beverages Philippines partners with ORIX Rental Corporation as its fleet solutions provider

Coca-Cola Beverages Philippines, Inc. (CCBPI) — the bottling arm of Coca-Cola in the country — strengthens its partnership with ORIX Rental Corporation (ORC), one of the country's leading companies engaged in Full Service Operating Lease (FSOL) of cars, vans and light trucks — with the latest delivery of almost 300 new service vehicles for Coca-Cola's sales force under ORC's FSOL solutions.

The procurement of new Toyota service vehicles is part of CCBPI's Tools of Trade refresh program, which decommissions older vehicles to upgrade the fleet with new models. Once the delivery tranches of vehicles are finalized, CCBPI will have a total of close to 800 units with active operating leases with ORC.

The delivery of the first batch composed of 202 units started in December 2020 and was completed last April. Last September, CCBPI awarded ORC a contract to provide close to 600 more units, which are scheduled to be turned over from December 2021 onwards.

"Our Company's top priority has always been to look after our people. Part of our People First commitment is to make sure that our associates have the proper resources for a more fulfilling career," says Richard Schlasberg, CCBPI Commercial Vice-President. "Amid the challenges we face, we are pursuing our People initiatives and we continue to empower our people through initiatives like refreshing our tools of trade."

Mr. Schlasberg adds, "We are excited to complete the deliveries and to fully transition to the new vehicles very soon. We are very grateful for our partnership with ORC, and for their help and support."

"We are truly honored to have been chosen as the corporate fleet solutions partner of CCBPI. ORIX

Rental Corporation is a Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) company. Our full service operating lease offers worry-free solutions that help improve the efficiency and productivity of the sales and operating officers of companies. We manage all the time-consuming administrative tasks such as vehicle purchase, maintenance, registration and insurance, thereby allowing our clients to concentrate on their core business," ORC President Constancio Tan said during the ceremonial turnover held recently at Toyota Makati, Inc. (TMI) showroom in Makati City.

Present at the turnover ceremony were Ronald Tamayo (CCBPI Procurement Director), Mike Gamo (CCBPI Procurement Category Manager), Shintaro Yamaji (ORC Director), Helen Aguilar (ORC Executive Group Head), Lito Ondevilla (ORC Marketing and Operations Group Head), Blesilda Rodriguez (Toyota Makati, Inc. President), and Cristina Fe Arevalo (Toyota Motor Philippines' New Mobility Business Division Senior Vice-President).

FSOL benefits and advantages

ORC services multinational companies and big local corporations by providing vehicles for lease to cater to their various transportation needs. Its FSOL product is the best option for acquiring brand new vehicles since companies do not need to allocate any funds and pay outright. The monthly rental payments are fixed throughout the term of the lease period.

The company's FSOL offers a complete service package — from the purchase of vehicles, periodic service maintenance, insurance claims, LTO renewal and disposal of units. Each client will have one central contact (Fleet Service Advisor) who will



Present at the contract signing are (seated from left: Shintaro Yamaji (ORC Director), Constancio Tan (ORC President), Richard Schlasberg (CCBPI Commercial Vice-President), Ronald Tamayo (CCBPI Procurement Director), Blesilda Rodriguez (Toyota Makati, Inc. President), and Cristina Fe Arevalo (Toyota Motor Philippines' New Mobility Business Division Senior Vice-President). Joining them are (standing from left) Luis Gotaco (ORC), Jodie Ann Dalangin (ORC), Christian Pascual (CCBPI), Lito Ondevilla (ORC Marketing and Operations Group Head), Mike Gamo (CCBPI Procurement Category Manager), Helen Aguilar (ORC Executive Group Head), Lee Junia (Toyota Makati, Inc. General Manager), Lyndon Liwanag (Toyota Makati, Inc.), Cher del Norte (Toyota Makati, Inc.), Jason Montes (Toyota Makati, Inc.) and Maya Generoso (Toyota Makati, Inc.).

oversee all matters related to their fleet such as scheduling of preventive maintenance, assisting during accidents, and addressing technical concerns for the entire lease agreement.

Companies can rest assured that vehicles are in prime condition since maintenance is carried out regularly. ORC has close to 400 accredited dealers and repair shops nationwide that can provide servicing maintenance of the leased vehicles.

The full range of ORC's value-added services include 24-hour roadside assistance, seminars on defensive driving techniques, carnapping prevention, basic vehicle maintenance and fuel-

saving tips, and access to Fleet Portal to view various vehicle reports.

ORC's proven track record in FSOL and its extensive network of dealers help companies manage their businesses more efficiently, saving both time and money. With its presence nationwide, ORC is able to adapt its services to the needs of each client and help them make the best decisions for their company fleet.

ORC is a wholly-owned subsidiary of ORIX METRO Leasing and Finance Corporation, a joint venture between Metropolitan Bank and Trust Company (Metrobank) and ORIX Corporation, a pioneer in the

leasing industry in Japan. For more information about ORC's FSOL solutions, call (02) 8804-0800 / (02) 8858-8888 locals 231, 156 and 801 or email lponevilla@orix.com.ph, odromanillos@orix.com.ph, jglizada@orix.com.ph or visit www.orix.com.ph.



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