



Republic of the Philippines  
Department of Health  
**OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**

**October 29, 2020**

**EVA C. DE LEON, MD, FPCR**  
President  
Philippine College of Radiology

**Dear Dra. De Leon:**

This is to acknowledge the receipt of your letter detailing the concerns of your organization regarding the applicability of artificial intelligence/ machine learning (AI/ML) models in radiology to aid in the diagnosis of COVID-19.

The Department of Health (DOH) is aware of these AI/ML models, described as intelligent systems with browser/ server architecture which utilize imaging to facilitate diagnosis, assessment, staging and progression of diseases, in this case, COVID-19. We have received requests to participate in studies and received offers for donation for these AI-Assisted devices. Due to the relatively little evidence we have for these new technologies, the Department has requested the Health Technology Assessment Council (HTAC) to review existing literature to determine the merit of this new technology and to provide additional guidance to the DOH.

Evidence submitted by the HTAC reflected similar concerns that emanated from your organization. The HTAC has appraised the available data and raised issues related to performance testing, monitoring and evaluation and ultimately, data privacy protection. They also analyzed the health system impact of using AI- assisted devices and concluded that although the reported accuracy rate is attractive at 98%, it is still questionable as accuracy rates may be boosted or overestimated if there is high prevalence of COVID-19 in the setting. HTAC also mentioned several limitations of AI namely: area under the curve, model maintenance, brittleness or tendency of an AI model to 'break' given different or varying disease distributions/ population shifts. (<https://bit.ly/HuaweiDiagnosis>.)

Likewise, through Department Memorandum 2020-0439 or the Omnibus Interim Guidelines on the Prevention, Detection, Isolation, Treatment and Reintegration Strategies for COVID-19, the DOH reiterates that RT-PCR remains the gold standard for the diagnosis of COVID-19. Other diagnostic tests may only be used in certain instances as described in the same document. The said issuance may be accessed through this link: <https://bit.ly/3e6b2iY>.

Rest assured that we are continuously recalibrating our strategies targeted to address the overall objective of the COVID-19 response. Among our top priority is to increase the capacity of our health systems to identify those infected. Thus, the DOH has employed strategies to strengthen contact tracing, isolation and quarantine, as well as scaling up testing capacity of the country and monitoring innovations and technologies which can be potentially useful in

detecting the virus. However, given the number of testing devices in the market, the DOH remains vigilant in recommending the appropriate diagnostic tests for public use. We believe that knowledge regarding the diagnostic tests for SARS-CoV-2 is still evolving, and a clear understanding of the nature of the tests and interpretation of their findings are important.

Lastly, the DOH extends its appreciation to the Philippine College of Radiology because of their relentless efforts in our fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Through our collaboration, our Department continues to ensure that the highest standards of research are applied in the formulation and implementation of policies.

Sincerely yours,

**MARIA ROSARIO SINGH-VERGEIRE, MD, MPH, CESO IV**  
OIC-Undersecretary of Health  
Health Regulation Team