

HFA Conducts Research into the Cost of Covid Treatment in Indonesia

In March of 2020, Dr. Shanty Arriany experienced the start of the Covid pandemic at MMC Hospital Kuningan in South Jakarta. As it did everywhere else, the pandemic hit South Jakarta hard. It was impossible to be prepared for such a situation, but Dr. Shanty persevered, doing the best she could to give her patients the most relief possible.

“Covid was shocking for us,” Dr. Shanty describes. She recalls the first Covid patient she treated, saying, “we didn’t have an isolation room yet. We didn’t have Covid protocols, like Covid screenings for all patients. Before I knew that Covid was in my hospital, we thought a patient had typhoid, so I treated her for that. But her condition decreased. Eventually, I tested her for Covid and was shocked when it came back as positive since I had been interacting with her like she was a normal patient, not a Covid case. After seven days in the hospital, she passed away. After that, I started to develop bad anxiety because of the pandemic’s stress”.

Unfortunately, this patient was only the beginning. Dr. Shanty, and all of Indonesia, saw significant growth in Covid cases, ultimately affecting over 271 Million people. The Delta Variant has become the dominant strain, with 2,670,046 cases and 69,210 deaths as of July 14. This crisis is partially due to the low vaccination rate Indonesia is facing. As of July 8th, only 13% of Indonesians had the first dose of the vaccine.

As disheartening as these statistics are, luckily the Ministry of Health was quick to cover all costs related to Covid treatment. This way, providers like Dr. Shanty could offer patients the treatment they needed while the government covers the cost. However, since Covid was so unforeseen, there was no data yet about how much this treatment costs.

As Covid transitions to endemic, Jaminan Kesehatan Nasional, the national health insurance system, will be replacing the MOH as the source of funding for Covid treatment. To make it possible for Indonesian policymakers to accurately budget for these costs, USAID’s Health Financing Activity (HFA) conducted the research needed to estimate the cost of Covid treatment. This works to ensure that Indonesians have access to the care they need.

The MOH, Ministry of Finance, Social Security Agency for Health (BPJS-K), and the National Social Security Council (DJSN) will be referencing this research as they discuss health financing, and HFA will further be consulted while meeting with the Governor of Jakarta to share the results of the research.

Due to government health coverage, providers like Dr. Shanty can continue to give their patients the best care without worrying about the cost of the treatment. She says, “Since the government started covering Covid treatment, I’ve been able to give the best medication to my patients”. Dr.

Shanty also shares that she was able to treat patients with comorbidities that otherwise wouldn't have had access to treatment if the government wasn't covering the cost. She describes this experience, saying, ““My hospital has helped recover many Covid patients because of the treatments we can offer them. We discharge elderly patients with comorbidities who say that it's a 'dream to survive Covid.' When I see that happen, I think, 'oh my god, this is amazing'”.

The work gone into this research can ultimately save lives, as it provides vital information needed to sustainably provide Covid treatment to Indonesians. Moving forward, Dr. Shanty and other providers will be able to give their patients the best care while the government finances these life-saving treatments.