

PUBLIC WARNED

Drugs don't give immunity vs. H1N1—DoH

by ALLISON LOPEZ
Inquirer.net

THE Department of Health (DoH) warned the public on health products that claim to provide immunity against the Influenza A(H1N1) virus.

The DoH has instructed the Bureau of Food and Drugs (BFAD) to stop distributors from misrepresenting the benefits of their products, said

Baby Banatin, director of the department's health emergency management services.

"There's this Vitamin C product that claims it provides immunity to the virus. Immunity is different from increasing resistance. Then there is this virgin coconut oil—that it can prevent the virus. This is misrepresentation," Banatin

said at a forum sponsored by the Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Association of the Philippines.

Banatin added that groups marketing the anti-flu vaccine as a preventive measure to the A(H1N1) flu virus were also spreading incorrect information as the vaccine could only protect from the seasonal flu. ■

GMA: All government hospitals must be AH1N1-ready!

DESPITE the absence of a "clear and present danger of the spread of the AH1N1 virus" in the country, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has ordered the Department of Health (DOH) to make sure that all state hospitals nationwide are prepared to handle such cases.

In a briefing during the joint National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA)-National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) meeting held last Tuesday May 26 at the Petron Office in Pandacan, Manila, Health Secretary Francisco Duque said the President saw the need to prepare for the worst thus the need to make an "over all preparations."

Duque said that thus far, the identified referral centers for suspected AH1N1 cases include are the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM), the Vicente

Sotto Memorial Hospital in Cebu City, and the Davao Medical Center, also in Davao City.

He stressed, however, that the AH1N1 virus has not yet reached pandemic level and there is no need yet for an additional budget. The P1-million fund from the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) will be used to stockpile vaccines, he explained.

In a related development, Education Secretary Jesli Lapus said it's all systems go for the school opening on June 1 despite the two confirmed cases of AH1N1 in the country.

"It is not prudent to postpone the opening of classes as we would be answerable to some 43,000 schools," Lapus said.

Lapus emphasized that DepEd's decision to postpone the opening of classes, if at all, will depend entirely on the Health Department's advice.

"DOH will advise us if situation warrants," he said, adding that what is important is for everyone to be alert. An alert system in schools nationwide has been set in place, he added.

At the same time, Lapus said the President issued guidelines to be made available to all school administrators, teachers, students and parents "for them to know exactly what to do to prevent the spread of the virus."

In another development, Health Secretary Duque branded as "baseless" the travel advisories against traveling to the Philippines issued by the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada.

"I'm surprised. There is no basis. It defeats logic. We should be issuing the travel ban ahead of them as they have more cases...but I'll have to check this out with the Department of Foreign Affairs," he said. ■

PNP ready to enforce measures vs H1N1 virus

by ABIGAIL KWOK
Inquirer.net

THE Philippine National Police is stepping up its watch against the deadly Influenza A(H1N1) flu virus, as it announced that it is ready to deal with those who refuse to undergo quarantine procedures.

In an interview, Senior Superintendent Francisco Altarejos, deputy chief of the PNP Health Services, said airport policemen and other police units were ordered to im-

mediately bring in to confinement anyone who will refuse to undergo quarantine or check-up, as the Department of Health recently confirmed two cases of H1N1 here.

Despite the statement, Altarejos said they have yet to encounter an incident where a possible H1N1 case refused to undergo quarantine procedures.

Altarejos also said the case fatality rate of H1N1 virus was very low compared to other cases such as dengue. ■

Some 100 policemen from the Aviation Security Group and another 100 from the elite Special Action Force have already undergone training on how to handle H1N1 cases.

For the protection of the assigned policemen against possible exposure to H1N1 cases, they will be given 420 pieces of disposable masks, 100 boxes of disposable gloves, 300 pieces of disposable gowns, Tamiflu medicines, and disinfectant, Altarejos said. ■



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