

Headline	Nearly 300 downed by poisoning in Bukidnon town	
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Nearly 300 downed by poisoning in Bukidnon town

ILIGAN CITY, Philippines — Nearly 300 church members composed mostly of young persons were rushed to various hospitals in Bukidnon over a form of poisoning that medical authorities have yet to determine.

The victims were participating in a national youth convention of the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) when they were taken ill in the afternoon of May 14 and brought to different hospitals.

Dr. Henry Legaspi, chief of the Bukidnon Provincial Medical Center, said they had sent specimens of rectal swabs of the patients to the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine in Manila to determine the cause of the illness, even as he ruled out that it was a diarrhea outbreak.

Legaspi said of the 169 patient admitted at the hospital on May 15, 45 have been discharged while 114 are still confined and under observation.

Colonel Edgardo de Leon, commander of the 403rd Infantry Brigade, and Lieutenant Colonel Ronald Illana, Commanding Officer of 8th Infantry Battalion, sent folding beds from their respective units for the use of the patients.

Pastor Allan Alingan, president of the SDA Movement of Northern Mindanao, told the Inquirer by phone on Thursday that there were actually nearly 300 delegates to the convention who got sick while they were holding their youth convention at Cedar, a government-owned convention facility in the village of Impalutaw of the town of Impasog-ong in Bukidnon.

He said the participants started to complain of stomach cramps and began vomiting on Tuesday and had severe diarrhea and chills later.

He ruled out contaminated food and water as the possible reasons for the illness as several residents in the neighboring area who did not partake of their food were also taken ill.

Alingan said personnel from the Department of Health in the province who inspected the venue found that some areas at Cedar's ground had swarms of flies, specifically those that were close to the compound's two septic tanks that were cleaned out just before the convention.

He said they were advised by the DOH inspectors to transfer to another venue that is not affected by flies and air pollution. But they decided to suspend the convention instead as they can attend to church members still confined in various hospitals.

Alingan said they are still awaiting information on who should be held accountable for the incident.