



DOH: DRUGMAKERS CAN'T GUARANTEE LOWER PRICES

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While it “appreciates” the gesture of the Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association of the Philippines (PHAP) to voluntarily reduce the price of select drugs and medicines, the Department of Health (DOH) expressed doubts that the group can guarantee lower prices at drug stores and private hospitals, which comprise “at least 90 percent of the total pharmaceutical market.”

In an effort to thwart the government’s plan to impose a price cap on more than a hundred medicines, the PHAP on Wednesday offered to cut by as much as 75 percent the price of 155 medications across 36 disease categories.

However, “given its voluntary nature,” the PHAP cannot guarantee price reduction, said Health Secretary Francisco Duque III in a statement.

He also pointed out that of the 155 drugs promised, only 107 would have prices cut across the pharmaceutical market. The remaining 43 would only be offered to DOH hospitals which cover less than 1 percent of the market.

The DOH added that only 63 of the 122 drugs proposed for price reduction were included in the list, with no price reduction for other high-cost medicines.

The other drugs volunteered for price reduction do not necessarily address the top burden of diseases in the country, and only affect small populations of patients, the DOH said, adding that in some cases, generic equivalents already exist for the proposed medicines which are even priced lower.

The proposed executive order on the maximum drug retail price (MDRP) is being discussed and refined with the help of other government agencies to ensure that the final price reduction will consider both the country’s economy and the people’s health, the DOH said.

The agency was also reviewing 49 individual position papers from other stakeholders, including medical associations, consumer organizations, and patient groups.

“At the end of the day, our decision will ultimately be to champion the right to health of the Filipino people,” Duque said. INQ