

'Leave Dengvaxia probe to experts'

Sen. JV Ejercito called on the Public Attorney's Office (PAO) on Sunday to leave to the experts the investigation of the Dengvaxia controversy, including the conduct of autopsies on children who were given the vaccine.

Ejercito issued the call in a radio interview, saying the conflicting findings of the PAO and experts from the Philippine General Hospital on autopsies they made, had only caused panic and alarm to parents like him who had allowed their children to be vaccinated with Dengvaxia.

Contrast in findings

"Let's leave the experts to do their job," he said, referring to the PGH team that included one of only two forensic pathologists in the country.

Ejercito stressed that the PAO was not the "persons in authority to speak on medical matters."

PAO forensic experts had

linked the deaths of 14 children they autopsied to the dengue vaccine. In contrast, forensic pathologists from the PGH found that none of the deaths were proven to be due to Dengvaxia.

"I'm inclined to believe the investigation and findings of PGH," said Ejercito, chair of the Senate health committee.

'Too early'

Sen. Richard Gordon also said it was "too early" for the PAO to link the children's deaths to Dengvaxia.

Following PGH's findings, a group called Doctors for Public Welfare that includes former Health Secretary Esperanza Cabral and vaccine expert Lulu Bravo, asked the Department of Justice (DOJ) to stop the PAO from conducting more autopsies because "it makes no sense for any more families to be subjected to the torture of hav-

ing a loved one exhumed and cut up only to find out that no useful information was derived from the cruel act."

Stop PAO autopsies

In a statement, the group urged "the DOJ to order the PAO to stop performing autopsies on these children and to leave the matter of determining the cause of death to competent forensic pathologists."

According to the group, it now appears that only one case may be causally associated with the vaccine, that is, the one with dengue and with antibodies to dengue.

However, it has yet to be determined if the vaccine had anything to do with the death, the group said. It further noted that two of the children autopsied showed that vaccine failure might have been the cause.

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* VACCINE