

# ₱1.16-B SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET SOUGHT FOR DENG VAXIA KIDS' MEDICAL CARE

The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and the Department of Health (DOH) will ask Congress to release ₱1.16 billion this year for the medical expenses of schoolchildren who will fall ill as a result of being immunized with the controversial dengue vaccine Dengvaxia.

Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno told reporters on Wednesday that the proposed supplemental budget for 2018 would disburse the refund from Sanofi's local distributor, Zuelig Pharma, that was remitted to the Bureau of the Treasury last month.

Diokno said the refund covered the value of Dengvaxia doses that were not used after the DOH halted a massive immunization program following Sanofi Pasteur's announcement of findings that the drug worsened symptoms in vaccinated people who had no previous exposure to the dengue virus.

### 830,000 children

The assistance for at least 830,000 children who have been vaccinated with Dengvaxia will cover expenses for hospitalization, as well as outpatient care.

The DBM estimated a cost of ₱768.9 million for medical assistance to indigent patients who may either be confined or treated as outpatients in government hospitals.

So-called Hepos (health education and promotion officers) will be deployed and medical kits will be distributed to the children under the program.

Some ₱131.8 million will cover the salary, transportation and communication allowances of 325 Hepos to be fielded starting this month up

to December. The medical kits will cost ₱261 million.

"The outpatient care package, worth ₱500 per vaccine includes a complete blood count, NS1 antigen test, urinalysis, medications and other laboratory tests as needed," the DBM said in a statement.

"[T]he medical kits, worth ₱300 per vaccine, include one thermometer, one mosquito repellent, two bottles of multivitamins and one package bag," it said.

### Patient turned away

Diokno said he expected the supplemental budget bill to be filed in May when Congress resumes sessions after the Lenten break.

The DOH is also looking into reports that some hospitals in Cavite province have refused to treat a Dengvaxia-vaccinated patient.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III was scheduled on Wednesday to visit General Emilio Aguinaldo Memorial Hospital, Genti Doctors Hospital and Medical Center, Pagamutan ng Dasmariñas, and De La Salle University Medical Center to inspect their dengue fast-lane services.

Duque said he would also inquire why some of the hospitals turned the patient away.

"I'm going there to personally warn them, if not file a case against them. What they did was unacceptable," he said in an interview on the sidelines of the ceremonial handover to the Department of Health of tuberculosis technical assistance products by the US Agency for International Development, and the Philippine Business for Social Progress.

"Hospitals are not supposed to be asking for deposits. It's against the law. That's in the warranties of the PhilHealth (Philippine Health Insurance Corp.) accreditation," Duque said.

"You're not supposed to reject emergency cases. No matter how full your hospital is, you have to accept and stabilize the patient before you can transfer them to another hospital that has the space or the accommodations," he added. —REPORTS

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\* vaccination - Dengvaxia