

4 non-communicable diseases killing Pinoys

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One in three Filipinos die prematurely from four leading non-communicable diseases (NCDs) before the age of 70.

This was the warning of specialists from the United Nations Interagency Task Force on Prevention and Control of NCDs and the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Secretariat who came for a week-long mission in the Philippines.

The experts said that one in three Filipinos is likely to die from cardiovascular diseases such as stroke or heart attack, diabetes, cancers and chronic respiratory diseases such as emphysema. But experts said there are many progressive initiatives to lower the burden of NCDs in the Philippines. These include the taxation of sugar-sweetened beverages and effective tobacco control measures such as placement of graphic health warnings and the Sin Tax Law.

The mission members also recognized the updated multisectoral plan to tackle NCDs in the Philippines.

However, the experts pointed out that there are difficulties in raising awareness among policymakers and the public about the threats of NCDs.

"To beat NCDs, we need urgent action taken at various levels of the government and engagement of all relevant stakeholders," said Gundo Weiler, WHO representative in the Philippines.

"The participation of different sectors during this joint mission clearly demonstrates that progress in NCDs prevention and control requires coordinated action by many sectors, such as finance, trade and industry, budget and management, parliamentarians, justice, education, labour and employment, agriculture, local government and others," he added.

The experts have observed that the current investments on NCDs are still focused on treatment.

They underscored that preventing premature deaths from NCDs will require greater investment in health promotion and protection measures.

International experience shows that investments in the prevention of NCDs are amongst the most effective public health investments, providing return of \$5 to \$94 for each dollar allocated to measures to reduce tobacco use, harmful use of alcohol, unhealthy diets and increase physical inactivity.

"Non-communicable diseases not only threatens an individual's health, they also jeopardize the social fabric and economic development of the Philippines," UN Philippines resident coordinator Ola Almgren said.

"We commend the Philippine government on their commitment to address NCDs in the country. The UN stands ready to continue its support in the translation of this commitment into effective action for the Filipino people," Almgren added.