

## Belmonte criticizes FDA for 'washing hands' on Ivermectin

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Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte on Monday criticized the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for “washing its hands” on its role to call out politicians who have been giving away non-FDA-approved, anti-parasitic drug Ivermectin to people as a cure against COVID-19. Belmonte also said that instead of taking a “final stance” against its use, the FDA allowed its compassionate use and even gave approval for its human use as “anti-nematode” or antiparasitic roundworms supposedly “to appease the politicians lobbying for it.”

“Rather than just take a strong stance against it and act against its distribution, they actually [said], okay let’s just approve it. It’s still approved as a parasitic drug, yes, but now there are ways and means to acquire it. I think that’s their way, for me, of probably appeasing the politicians,” the mayor said.

The FDA approved on Friday Ivermectin as an anti-nematode following a local pharmaceutical company’s application for a certificate of product registration.

“If I’m not mistaken, when I heard the interview by the FDA, they did say that it is not their role to call out these politicians. It is the role of congress to police their members, so it’s like washing their hands on that responsibility,” she added.

Congressmen Mike Defensor and Rodante Marcoleta gave away free Ivermectin, a drug commonly used for dogs, to residents of Quezon City on April 29.

Belmonte said that as a local chief executive, she is “disappointed” because she is not yet given any “clear directions” on how the local government “should be acting with regards to this matter,” particularly because the drug is not yet given FDA approval for human use against COVID-19.

“If they say...there’s no conclusive evidence that it is effective, if they say we would advise people not to use it, therefore, we will go after or we will request (FDA)... to work with us towards preventing the indiscriminate spread of this drug that has not yet proven any efficacy on any COVID positive patients or having a prophylaxis effect,” she said.

“They should act on this,” she added.

Belmonte also said she would refrain from making “any political statements. Adding that the discussion on the use of Ivermectin against COVID-19 should be settled in the medical realm. “When politicians start talking about this, then it becomes a political issue, and as you know, elections are coming up, and one of the congressmen is purported to be eyeing the position I currently hold and therefore I would like to refrain from making any political statements that may be construed as such,” she said, confirming Defensor as the mayoralty aspirant.