Belmonte warns medicine hoarders, profiteers

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The Quezon City government has issued a warning against hoarders and profiteers who take advantage of the reported shortage of some paracetamol brands and other medicines for flu-like symptoms.

Mayor Joy Belmonte urged the public to report hoarding and profiteering, saying the city government would not hesitate to prosecute those committing such acts.

"They are preventing citizens who just want to buy medicines for their families. We won't let them get away with this," Belmonte said.

According to city legal officer Niño Casimiro, those who engage in the hoarding of medicines and other basic necessities may be charged for violating provisions of Republic Act 7581 or the Price Act and RA 7394 or the Consumer Act.

Section 15 of the Price Act imposes penalties for hoarding and profiteering while the Consumer Act imposes criminal liability on unfair and unconscionable sales acts.

Quezon City also has an existing ordinance that sets limits on selling basic necessities during calamities and emergency situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

City health chief Esperanza Arias said they have talked to the supplier of the city's health centers to ensure sufficient supply of medicines for fever, colds and cough.

"We have free medicines that are available in our health centers. With the help of our new pharmacy management system, we have not reached a point when we lack medicines for residents who need them," Arias said.

Testing demand

Meanwhile, the Quezon City government has reported an increasing demand for COVID tests.

Belmonte on Wednesday urged residents manifesting symptoms such as fever, cough and cold to isolate to prevent the risk of spreading the virus.

On Wednesday night, the City Epidemiology and Disease Surveillance Unit (CESU) shut down its online registration site for free swab tests due to high volume of requests.

CESU head Rolly Cruz said the increased number of COVID tests that they are processing is affecting the turnaround time for the test results.