

—[SPECIAL REPORT]—

PITC bares high cost of medicines produced in RP

A RECENT price survey conducted by the Philippine International Trading Corp (PITC) showed that several medicines produced by the giant drug manufacturer Pfizer in the Philippines are overpriced by as much as 730 percent compared with products in other countries like India and Pakistan.

Roberto Pagdanganan, PITC chairman, said that based on their price survey, the price of the antihypertension medicine Norvasc, sold in the country at P44.75 per 5 mg tablet and P74.57 per 10 mg tablet, sold at cheaper prices but with the same contents and effect in neighboring countries.

Pagdanganan said that the same medicine can be bought in India for the peso equivalent of P8.74 per 5 mg tablet, and P17.09 per 10 mg tablet. It is much lower in Pakistan, where it can be bought at P5.98 per 5 mg tablet and P8.96 per 10 mg tablet.

The Times tried but failed to get a reaction from Pfizer.

Pagdanganan also cited Amlogard, which is also sold at a higher price than those sold in India and Pakistan.

Pagdanganan stressed that the PITC is simply waiting for the expiration of the patent on June 2007 so that the government could purchase the same Pfizer brand of medicine from India or Pakistan.

Pfizer has a pending case with the PITC over the planned purchase of the medicines.

"We have not even bought them yet. They are harassing us and even the drugstores," Pagdanganan said.

He vowed that by the end of the patent period the government would buy the medicines at cheaper prices.

He said that the basic pain reliever Ponstan is being sold at P24 in drugstores when the corporation can sell it through their "Botikang Bayan" outlets for only P14.

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