

Pfizer under fire

PROTESTERS belonging to consumer and labor groups yesterday staged a rally in Makati City to denounce the move of a multinational company to stop the government from importing cheap, but quality medicines.

Members of the Citizens' Alliance for Consumer Power, Katipunan ng mga Samahang Manggagawa, Association of Democratic Labor Organization and Mabisang Gamot para sa Mamamayan held a rally in front of the Pfizer offices on Ayala Life-FGU Center to protest the company's lawsuit over the importation of amlodipine besylate, the ingredient that is used for manufacture of anti-hypertensive drugs such as Pfizer's Norvasc.

"Why is it that drugs sold here are more expensive than those in India and Pakistan?" said Angel Mendoza, the protesters' spokesman. "Pfizer owns the patent on the said drug and is due to expire next year, so why are they opposing moves to manufacture anti-hypertensive medicines in our country?"

The protesters sought a dialogue with Pfizer officials led by its president Rey E.

Bacarro, but security guards at the building prevented them from entering the firm's offices. Mediamen covering the event were also barred from entering the building.

Mendoza added they also fully support the Philippine International Trading Corp. and the Bureau of Food and Drugs, the two respondents in the case filed by Pfizer.

Pfizer asked the Makati Regional Trial Court to issue a temporary restraining order that would enjoin PITC from making, using or offering for sale or distribution any amlodipine besylate product.

The petition for TRO also sought to prevent BFAD from entertaining any applications for product registration on amlodipine besylate covered by the Pfizer patent.

PITC chairman and president Roberto Pagdanganan said they have not marketed any amlodipine besylate product in the country and has repeatedly informed Pfizer that the agency has no intention of doing so until the Pfizer patent expires on June 13, 2007.