

Pfizer bid to stop drug import hit

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NEWS

Pfizer hit for bid to stop drug import

PROTESTERS wielding placards belonging to consumer and labor groups staged a rally on Friday on Ayala Avenue, 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 Organizations and Mabisang Gamot para sa Mamamayan held a rally in front of Pfizer offices on Ayala Life-FGU Center to protest the pharmaceutical 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.

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.

Mendoza added they also fully support the Philippine International Trading Corp. (PTIC) and the Bureau of Food and Drugs (BFAD), the two respondents in the case filed by Pfizer in a Makati court.

Pfizer had 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.

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.

Norvasc is sold at the local market at prices 650% and 750% higher than in India. The drug is priced here at P44.75 per 5 mg tablet and P74.57 per 10 mg tablet. The same medicine is sold by Pfizer in India under the brand name Amlogard at the equivalent of P5.98 per 5 mg tablet and P8.96 per 10 mg tablet.