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Harvard study claims expired drugs are still potent **Villar urges health experts to conduct similar study on expired drugs**

Saying this could bring huge savings for the government; Sen. Manny Villar urged health officials and experts in the country to conduct a study that will prove whether or not drugs can still be used even after their expiration date.

This came after a study by American experts revealed that drugs if properly stored under good condition are potent even after 15 years of its expiration.

Last week, Villar started an investigation as chairman of the Senate Committee on Trade and Commerce joint with the Senate Committee on Health and Demography to look into government's policy on expired drugs after the Harvard Medical School released a study saying that most drugs can still be used 15 years after its expiration.

This study revealed that 90 percent of more than 100 drugs, both prescription and over-the-counter were perfectly good to use even 15 years after their expiration date, provided that they are stored under good conditions like a cool, dark, and dry place.

Few rare exceptions to this new theory of extended shelf life of medicines would be tetracycline, nitroglycerine, insulin and liquid antibiotics.

"I am not suggesting that we go around distributing expired medicines to our countrymen, not at all. But to me, this new idea, which is backed up by a proper study, could prove useful to us," Villar said.

"I would like to know our medical experts' views on this, so we may find a way to better manage the supply of our medicines, prevent wastage, and also avoid criticisms when the government inadvertently gives out free medicines found to be expired," he added.

During the public hearing, it was revealed that the Department of Health spends P4 billion to P5 billion, or 15 percent of the department's total budget each year, to purchase medicines.

Villar also wants to find out from Health Sec. Enrique Ona the amount of money wasted from expired drugs.

He also supported the recommendation of resource persons present during the hearing to enact a law that will allow consumers to return expired medicines which can no longer be used to drug stores in exchange for a rebate.

Villar noted that in 1979, a law was passed in the United States requiring drug manufacturers to stamp an expiration date which can guarantee the full potency and safety of their products.

In the 1990s, the US military requested the US Food and Drug Administration to conduct a study on the viability and potency of medicines beyond their expiration dates after more than US\$100 million were spent yearly for replacements.

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