DOH taking ‘steps’ on expiring drugs

The Department of Health (DOH) on Thursday said it was taking necessary actions following a report by the Commission on Audit (COA) that P294.767 million worth of medicines remain in a warehouse and are nearing expiration.

The DOH said it had been distributing the medicines since January.

According to the agency, following the recommendations of the COA in its 2018 report, concerned DOH teams have been working together to resolve the issues on overstocking, distribution and warehousing, among others.

To date, all stocks of Filariasis kits, CD4 cartridge kits, tuberculin purified protein derivative and Japanese encephalitis vaccines have already been distributed, the DOH said in a statement.

“We took steps already like distribution and reallocation of drugs. A new office was also created to make sure that our supply chain management is more orderly,” Health Undersecretary Eric Domingo said in a separate interview. He added that they have also been reviewing the agency’s procurement programs.

Domingo said no expired medicine had been distributed.

“We do not give expired medicines. If it’s expired, it can no longer be distributed,” he said. “What we have been distributing to the regional offices as well as other areas where they are needed are medicines nearing expiration. Distribution has been going on since the start of the year.”

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In a statement, the DOH said funds have been allocated for the payment of warehouse rentals and hauling of commodities to facilitate immediate distribution.

“To improve further operations and processes for utilization of health commodities, the DOH has implemented organizational changes to ensure that dedicated units for logistics monitoring and management, and procurement monitoring and management are in place,” it added.

It also tapped several development partners such as the United States Agency for International Development, United Nations Population Fund and the Philippine Business for Social Progress, among others, to assist in improving the DOH delivery system and processes.

The health agency added it had intensified coordination with national government agencies and local government units (LGUs) to supplement the provision of health commodities to targeted beneficiaries.
The DOH said its remaining metformin inventory (133,500 units from 988,800 units) would be distributed to LGUs, centers for health and development (regional offices) and DOH hospitals for use of patients in outpatient departments until the end of the month.

Its remaining stocks of micronutrient powder sachets (84,100,140 units from 157,060,620 units) will be distributed to DOH hospitals for pediatric patients, nongovernment organizations, orphanages and miners positive for mercury.

The DOH said micronutrient powder sachets would also be provided to supplementary feeding programs as well as reception and study centers for children.

“The DOH assures the public that it will continue to work toward improving access to health care services, including drugs and medicines, as it pushes for the full implementation of Universal Health Care,” it added.