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## MAG GENERICS TAYO - DOH

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[0] You think prices of common medicines are too expensive? Maybe you're not looking for generic drugs.

Generic medicines, or drugs, are quality copies of what are called original or innovator medicines. As innovator, they are given up to 20 years of exclusively producing and selling a medicine, also called patent. This means that the manufacturer dictates the price of this specific drug as long as it has the patent. Hence, there are some medicines that are expensive and do not have any competing brands.

When the patent expires after 20 years, other companies can now make quality copies (or generic equivalents) of the innovator drug and sell them at a lower and more competitive cost.

"It's amazing that many of our countrymen do not know that what they are really using are generic drugs. For example, the generic medicine paracetamol can be bought as Biogesic, Tempra, Calpol, etc.", Health Secretary Francisco Duque said, adding all these are of different brands, are of the same quality but differ in price.

Some generic drug manufacturers put brands on their products to capitalize on the brand mentality of Filipinos. However, in Botika ng Barangay outlets all over the country, the same quality generic drugs are being sold by as much as 50 centavos per tablet to just one peso.

"The key is to give people the choice to buy what they can afford", the health chief emphasized.

"Generics use in the country is steadily increasing over the years. As one of the anti-poverty initiatives of the government since it provides affordable medicines to the poor and the vulnerable, the generics program is central and key to improving access and affordability of medicines in the country" he added.

According to recent Social Weather Station (SWS) surveys, there is an increase in the number of people using generic medicines from 49% in 2003 to 55% in 2006. Five to six out of ten Filipinos are now looking for generic medicines when they buy.

Data from the Department of Health (DOH) also reveal that 11,800 Botika ng Barangay (BnB) outlets are existing nationwide, most of which are flourishing. The same data report that 25 million people have been served since its first outlet was established.

Previously manufactured only by small companies, generic medicines are now produced by more and bigger companies who have earned the trust of consumers. Even multinationals are making generic versions of their products.

"We intend to sustain the gains of the Generics Law, or Republic Act 6675, achieved in the past five years", Duque vowed adding that the public can see for themselves examples of quality generic drugs on September 25-26 during the Generics Summit exhibit. The exhibit is part of the First Summit on Generics where there will be a lively sharing of ideas and best practices among

government and non-government agencies, the pharmaceutical industry, medical and allied professions, and other stakeholders

To give due recognition to its partners and stakeholders who have made an impact on generic drugs and medicines use in their areas, there will be an Awards Night on September 26 honoring the best performers in the private and public sector, including honoring generics manufacturers who take the pains of assuring their products are of the highest quality.

The Department of Health's (DOH) generics drugs promotion recently received a much-needed boost when Republic Act 9502, otherwise known as the Universally Accessible Cheaper and Quality Medicines Act of 2008, was signed.

September is Generics month and the country observes the 20th year of the signing of the Generics Law. The health chief leads the celebration with promotion activities such as putting up posters today (September 19) in stations of the Light Rail Transit 1 and 2 on the value of generic drugs. For more information, contact Dr. Robert Louie So (Program Manager, National Drug Policy Program) at 781-7686 to 90 locals 1101-1103

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