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PH ALLERGY EXPERTS ENCOURAGE COVID-19 VACCINATION

Press Release | 11 February 2021

The Philippine Society of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology (PSAAI) on Monday reassured the public that the benefits of COVID-19 vaccines “far outweigh” the potential risks of adverse reactions, as well as the risk of developing severe COVID-19 or death.

During the February 8 DOH Media Forum, PSAAI President and National Adverse Event Following Immunization Committee member Dr. Rommel Lobo presented the Association’s position statement after recent reports of possible adverse reactions to COVID-19 vaccines raised public concern.

“In general, vaccines are safe and effective. Vaccination saves lives. For the Filipinos, we will only give vaccines that are proven to be safe and effective. And vaccination is free and will be made available for all Filipinos starting with high-risk sectors such as health workers and then senior citizens,” Dr. Lobo said

He also added that “Majority of COVID-19 vaccine adverse reactions are mild. Reactogenic reactions include pain, tenderness, and swelling and can be managed with supportive care. Mild allergic reactions such as rashes can be managed with antihistamines.”

According to Dr. Lobo, PSAAI has examined all relevant information to offer reassurance that the vaccines can be administered safely even to people with food or medication allergies. However, he highlighted that healthcare practitioners should observe vaccinees for at least 30 minutes post-vaccination. He said that while the risk of anaphylaxis is rare, it should be recognized and managed promptly with Epinephrine. The PSAAI President further said that anaphylaxis is the only contraindication for some COVID-19 vaccines and healthcare practitioners who will be vaccinating against COVID-19 should be sufficiently trained to properly recognize and manage anaphylaxis. Dr. Lobo added that vaccination centers must be equipped with the proper medications necessary to manage immediate allergic reactions.

Dr. Lobo emphasized that COVID-19 vaccines that have been granted an Emergency Use Authorization by the Philippine Food and Drug Administration followed an open and transparent review process and a thorough evaluation from scientific and public health experts to ensure that safety and effectiveness are met.

This was echoed by Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Singh-Vergeire who said the added protection of COVID-19 vaccine will bring the Philippines one step closer to resuming a more normal life. USec. Singh-Vergeire however emphasized the need to still practice consistent use of face masks and face shields, physical distancing of at least one meter, and proper and frequent handwashing which are all vital tools for the country’s overall recovery.