

Anemia Awareness

By: Amelita L. Buted

Have you ever been told you were anemic or were you advised to take iron by your doctor and when you did, did you feel much better? It is important to be aware of the condition that is silently affecting an estimated 30 percent of the world's population.

What really is anemia and who are at risk? These and more were discussed by PhilHealth President and CEO Dr. Rey B. Aquino, in his weekly radio program, "PhilHealth, Hataw sa Serbisyo!" over DWIZ 882 KHz AM every Friday, 10:00 to 10:30 in the morning. For this particular episode, Aquino tackled the most common in the Philippines, which is iron deficiency anemia.

Anemia basics

Although it is reported that up to 30 percent of the world's population is anemic, it is particularly common among young women because of the loss of blood during their monthly period or menstrual cycle. Aquino further said that anemia develops when there are not enough healthy red blood cells in the body to carry oxygen from the lungs to all parts of the body. This means that hemoglobin count is below normal. It should not be lower than 13.5 grams per 100 ml for males and not lower than 12 grams per 100 ml for females.

Facts told: signs and symptoms

Hence, with the lack of oxygen being carried to the different parts of the body, Aquino said that indeed, one of the symptoms of anemia is fatigue or feeling tired. A patient who is anemic may also experience shortness of breath, dizziness or fainting spells, irritability, brittle nails, depression and digestive disorders, among many others.

Aquino answered in the affirmative when asked if it is true that chewing ice is a sign that one may have an iron deficiency and that one could be anemic. He added that this abnormal craving for non-food items which includes paper, starch and even clay, is called pica, an eating disorder.

Belying myths

Aquino also belied some myths surrounding anemia such as hair loss and lack of sleep. He said that it is not true that temporary or permanent hair loss is a sign that one is anemic; likewise, lack of sleep does not directly cause anemia. Also, to refute the belief that anemia may lead to leukemia, Aquino averred that anemia is a red blood cell deficiency while leukemia is a blood cancer involving white blood cells.

Precluding the condition

Anemia is simply an iron deficiency, Aquino reiterated, and advised those who are affected with this condition, particularly the women, to take multi vitamins with iron and to eat iron-rich foods as well as take supplemental oral iron medications to replace blood loss.

PhilHealth advances prevention

While PhilHealth covers hospitalization benefits in cases of emergency where a member suffers serious complications requiring confinement, the PhilHealth Chief believes that "prevention is still better than cure".

PhilHealth Hataw sa Serbisyo airs every Friday, 10:00 – 10:30 a.m. over Radio DWIZ 882 KHz-AM. It is hosted by PhilHealth President and CEO Dr. Rey B. Aquino and is co-hosted by DWIZ News Director Ely Aligora and seasoned anchor Marou Pahati-Sarne. It can also be heard LIVE through www.dwiz882.com.

