



Filipino nurses in Manila.

MANILA — The Department of Health (DOH) will look into reports that Filipino nurses are paying hospitals to allow them to gain experience in order to work abroad.

Health Secretary Enrique Ona said the department has not received any formal complaint from nurses, but would nonetheless investigate the reports and impose appropriate sanctions on hospitals abusing the free labor of nurses.

“We been receiving such reports, but until this time we have not recorded any formal complaint. So we are calling on the nurses who were forced to pay the hospitals for volunteer work to report such cases to us so we can investigate,” Ona said.

He said complainants need not disclose their identity.

They should just submit a complaint letter to the department or provide information through the DOH website.

Many licensed but unemployed nurses are forced to work as volunteers in tertiary hospitals to gain work experience.

Ona noted that the trend resulted from an oversupply of nurses in the country and low overseas demand because of the prevailing economic slump.

“(But) the hospitals should not take advantage of the surplus and let abuses be committed against our nurses. If indeed there are abuses we will impose sanction,” he said.

Labor Secretary Rosalinda Baldoz said, however, that hospitals accepting volunteer nurses are not committing a violation.

“If the hospitals really do not need additional staff and would just allow volunteers who would want to gain experience, it is really not a violation. What we should look into is if the training in the hospitals is really adequate to comply with the requirement of foreign hospitals,” she said.

Militant group Partido ng Manggagawa (PM) called on hospitals to stop charging nurses seeking on-the-job-training.

The group said trainee nurses should be treated as probationary employees who are guaranteed minimum wage and other benefits, with the opportunity to become regular nurses after a six-month temporary status.