

By SHEILA COVARRUBIAS

Mayor Beng Climaco on Tuesday signed Executive Order 174 declaring gastroenteritis outbreak in Zamboanga City, as cases have already exceeded alert and outbreak thresholds from March 18-April 21, 2016 with majority of the cases affecting vulnerable groups.

The disease has claimed five (5) lives, 4 of which pedia (children)cases, but all of which had co-morbidities such as pneumonia and malnutrition.

In her order, the mayor tasked City Health Officer Rodel Agbulos along with other concerned offices and agencies and all health institutions in the city to institute, undertake and implement curative and proactive measures to effectively address and eradicate the outbreak.

Based on the April 21, 2016 report from the CHO, there were 813 cases admitted in different hospitals in the city due to AGE from March 18-April 18. Last Monday (April 25), however, the number has soared to 1,124 cases with majority of the cases affecting the vulnerable groups of 1-5 year-old bracket with 526 cases and the under 12 months bracket with 237 cases.

Stool culture results from the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) revealed last week that viral infection, norovirus, a highly contagious virus, caused majority of the AGE cases in the city. Proper hand washing and general hygiene are among the best measures to prevent the spread of norovirus.

In view of the abnormally high number of cases of acute gastroenteritis, Dr. Agbulos has recommended the declaration of the outbreak in the city.

In accordance with the General Welfare clause of the Local Government Code of 1991, as amended, Mayor Climaco said there is an urgent need for the issuance of EO BC No. 174-2016 declaring a gastroenteritis outbreak in the city and institute, undertake and implement curative and other proactive measures to effectively address and eradicate the outbreak.

## **Gastroenteritis outbreak declared in Zambo City**

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In Monday's press briefing in City Hall, Dr. Agbulos said his office can utilize its standby funds for health emergencies once the EO declaring gastroenteritis outbreak in the city is signed. Advocacy on norovirus will be intensified further for the people be more aware of how the virus can be controlled and prevented. — Sheila Covarrubias