



# Incisions

The Newsletter of the Philippine College of Surgeons

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## COVER STORY

# Transition To Endemic Phase: COVID-19 in Evolution

• Marcus Jose B. Brillantes, MD, FPCS, FPSGS •

After beginning the year with a jolt by the Omicron variant and its eventual rapid decline shortly thereafter, the pandemic phase of COVID-19 appears to be tapering in most countries which hopefully sets the stage for a new phase as the world advances toward an uncertain new normal. The wall-to-wall media coverage of the pandemic has receded and replaced by the constant reportage of the Russia-Ukraine war but COVID still continues with its own unique version of stealth invasion. The main risk of the transition to an endemic phase is a significantly different new variant that replaces Omicron as the dominant strain. The last two years given rise to five variants of concerns (VOCs): Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, and Omicron.

Countries currently relaxing health protocols and reopening during the decline of the Omicron wave do so with starkly contrasting experiences of COVID-19. For example, the death rate per capita in a previous month for the United States was at 50% and is ten times greater than the Philippines. Meanwhile, China is battling a renewed surge in infections, fueled by the Omicron BA.2 sub-variant, also known as Stealth Omicron. In Shanghai, authorities ordered its 26 million residents to undergo two more rounds of tests for COVID-19 as public anger boils over how authorities in China's most populous city are mismanaging the record coronavirus surge. Despite the use of severe containment measures, there are no signs of the virus wavering in other parts of the globe. The World Health Organization (WHO) has criticised several European countries for "abruptly" easing health restrictions. European states where there is a noted spike in cases are the UK, Ireland, Greece, Cyprus, France, Italy and Germany.

After a dramatic drop in nonessential surgery rates early in the pandemic, hospitals worldwide quickly adapted to new safety protocols. In the US, it is said that the rates gradually returned to normal. It still haven't reached pre-pandemic rates in our country.

As for the role of the vaccines toward the new normal phase, the Omicron variant has served as both a warning and a test.

Many epidemiologists have stated that simply allowing COVID to spread unchecked (Herd Immunity) gives rise to greater risks of mutation

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## On the Cover



SCRUBBING BACK IN

Dr. Kathryn Cecille Umali-Gomez is currently practicing as a General and Laparoscopic Surgeon at the Medical City Clark and St. Catherine of Alexandria Foundation and Medical Center, Angeles City. She finished her residency training at Pasig City General Hospital - Mary Chiles General Hospital Consortium in 2015. She is a Diplomate of the Philippine Board of Surgery, a Fellow of the Philippine Society of General Surgeons (PSGS) and of the Philippine College of Surgeons (PCS). She is currently Chief of Surgery at Philippine Rehabilitation Institute and Medical Center (PRIMC), and a faculty member of the Department of Surgery at Angeles University Foundation School of Medicine.

Her interest in painting began as a child all through her college years, but went on hiatus during her medical training. Recently she has revisited both painting and digital art as a fruitful and portable hobby.

# FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Marcus Jose B. Brillantes, MD, FPCS



## The 2022 PCS President A Brief History of an Early Life

In the close to 3-hour private interview, the newly elected President of the Philippine College of Surgeons was seen to be relaxed wearing a green chapter sports shirt, clearly in a casual and convivial mood and hardly exhibiting any signs of being ill at ease with the newly acquired enormous responsibilities of our surgical society. But the moment the interview proper was underway, he became serious and searingly honest in laying bare a straightforward account.

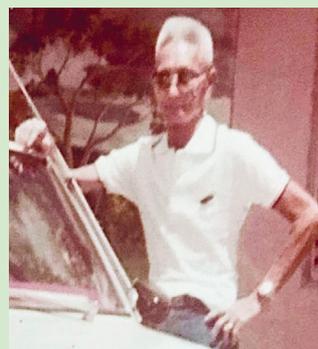
He was not one to dither in disclosing his family's underprivileged background; or to point out the little known fact that theirs was a misbegotten family by casually referring to his three siblings and himself offhandedly as the "second batch". It is a delicate subject matter in which one ordinarily would rarely venture to divulge. But there he was, in all dispassionate coolness, narrating of his grim lineage past and the grinding poverty the family had to humbly endure with his characteristic nonchalance that was oftentimes punctuated with his usual brand of anecdotal irreverence actually meant to disarm us. It was almost as if these intimate narratives of humiliating social ramifications leapt straight out of F. McCourt's darkish memoir "Angela's Ashes".

The deeply resonating story of Dr. Ramon S. Inso, with its reminiscences an intermixture of pathos and humor, ought to be told if only to serve as an inspiration for all.

By his informal account, Dr. Inso's father, Saw Huay Eng (Pedro Saw), was a pure Chinese national who hailed from Amoy, China. Migrating southward, Mr. Saw sought greener pastures in these tropical islands and finally decided to settle in Cebu. He set up his residence and business in the Chinese commercial area, across the public market at Poblacion, Lapulapu City, formerly known as the town of Opon.

Dr. Inso revealed he was "the second to the youngest of the four illegitimate children of Simporiana Inso, a household help of the first family of the common father". Their family lived within the same residence but were relegated to the confines of the maid's quarters. Their house, situated along a main thoroughfare, was that of the old Spanish design with its distinctive capiz windows facing the street, featured two-levels. The first level was a general merchandise store which sold various kinds of grains and other common household items. Some lumber products were also on display at the adjacent space. The residential quarters were at the second floor level.

Growing up as a child, Dr. Inso disclosed that he and his siblings were "deprived of so many things – proper nutrition, food, etc." Yet his mother remained as a constant force who nurtured her brood by example and instilled family values of unity, industriousness, charity and fortitude. What the family may have lacked in materially, the mother more than made up with her caring presence.



Dr. Inso's father, Saw Huay Eng (Pedro Saw)



Simporiana Inso  
Circa 2000

“During meal time, our mother would prepare cooked corn grits (not rice) which was our staple food, just like that given to the household helpers.” He recalled how in a large metal cooking bowl, his mother would place a modest amount of cooked corn grits, pour some discarded excess oil that had previously been used for frying pork and add to this mix some meager amount of soy sauce or a dash of shrimp paste (‘bagoong’) for saltiness and taste. His mother would then roll up the basic component mishmash into diminutive spheres, line up her undernourished children according to age and deposit these suboptimal nutrient morsels into their hungry mouths. This family feeding practice was routine for “every meal for several years.” If his mother by chance had extra money on infrequent occasions, she would give her children some spare coins for them to have the special delectable of buying grilled barbecue from the neighborhood street vendor - a poignant memory Dr. Inso visibly relished with fondness. Another alternative meal fare consisted simply of condensed milk. It is at this point while listening to this detail that it hits me: No wonder Sir often has such a craving for ice cream – it was likely a rare luxurious treat to partake of during his younger years.

As a child, he did manage to engage in the various youthful games in the busy streets of Poblacion like shooting marbles, playing basketball with other neighborhood kids his age or hanging outside precariously on to jeepneys as they sped along the dusty city routes in the metropolis. And though appearing to wander in a carefree manner as a “street child” in his early years, the young Ramon did have noble ambitions and set goals to improve his lot. Other individuals born under these circumstances may have easily given up in despair. But such are the accounts of a type of person who never lapsed or succumbed into self-pity (which was likewise unaffordable) but instead kept the fire of aspiration well-stoked.

“It came to a point that I developed some degree of pity on our family and especially on the other family who were in a worse situation than we were and I even envied my classmates and other friends whose status in life were much better. I thought about how their parents did it to succeed in life”, he pondered to himself then like an outsider looking in. He assessed

himself to be generally “well behaved”. Acquaintances even entertained the thought that he could possibly be a candidate for the priesthood.

Through personal diligence and determination, distinctive qualities he started to display in his coming-of-age years, he excelled academically in his primary and secondary school years and consistently ranked among the top three honors in his batch annually. During this formative stage, he was also exposed to several leadership platforms by heading a number of school organizations and he was even elected by the student body as President of the high school student council. He likewise became President of the Philippine Junior Jaycees of their local chapter.

Regarding this period he added, “I used to carry bags of cement on those times when our parents started to trust in our capabilities and skills in helping in the hardware and lumber business, serving as a salesperson, helper and delivery boy. This was our way of helping out in income generation for the family and working for our tuition and ‘baon’. Frequently, I would make sure I had some savings from the smidge ‘baon’ preferring to just walk, to cut down the two or three rides to just one ride, to and from home and also many times intentionally avoiding snacks or even meals.”

Chronicling on the outline of his life, Dr. Inso recounted about his going into pre-medicine studies as an English major and having a keen interest in entering medical school. His father had long yearned for one of his children to become a doctor.

During the informal interview, Dr. Inso continued to narrate, “With the limited resources and opportunities and noticing the apparent inability of many of the other children in achieving their supposed goals in life along with my realization of the inappropriate measures or practices they adapted, lead me to focus on my goal and be determined to become a physician, which was also my parents’ wish. Living in an environment characterized by significant degree of oppression, these factors, of course with my mother’s efforts, both overt and discreet, pushed me to finish the medical course.”



Dr. Inso as a medical student at the Cebu Institute of Medicine

Medical School Graduate, Cebu Institute of Medicine

Dr. Inso's stories further related about his personal experiences in applying for a residency program after successfully hurdling the medical board exams; of the arduous years in surgical training which were oftentimes interjected with reflective humor and the

dishing out of various anecdotes in finally deciding to settle down and start a family.

In reference to this time of his life, Dr. Inso stressed the importance of having the "right attitude" and doing one's best in any given situation. He cited a deep aversion to dishonesty. Another point he repeatedly emphasized was to "be responsible" - whatever the consequences of one's actions.

He never imagined himself to attain such an esteemed position but with untiring diligence he has striven his way up "to make the most of what I had." Dr. Inso takes exceptional pride in his children who are all physicians, mentioning that they are his "best diplomas and investments".

This is an abridged bildungsroman of a man whose childhood was blighted by poverty and social challenges but transforms his life by sheer courage and resolution into purposefulness that shines forth with love, compassion, determination and that of being a testament to the triumph of the spirit and will.

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> *Transition To Endemic Phase... from 2*

into new strains. And there is no assurance that the emergence of such new variants will be less fatal amidst the widespread misconception that viruses evolving over time become more benign. Case point: the Delta variant was more fatal than the first strain that emerged in Wuhan, China. Omicron also partly evades protection from the currently available vaccines. But they have been proven to be highly effective in severe disease prevention and death - particularly with the third booster shots which have been rolled out across the world.

Many questions arise starting with the duration of immunity of the COVID vaccines. Evidence suggests that both natural and vaccine-induced immunity wane over time, particularly against infection. While we don't yet know the full extent of waning immunity for Omicron, new evidence indicates that those who have received three doses of vaccine may benefit from medium-term protection. At the same time, booster uptake has been significantly lower than first- and second-dose coverage in many countries.

Countries such as Israel and Sweden have started administering fourth doses, but experts fear that an endless number of booster shots is an inferior strategy. An Israeli trial last January also found that a fourth dose was less effective against Omicron.

The WHO emphasises that the best way to end the acute phase of the pandemic is for developed countries to share their doses rather than boost their populations again. Only 13% of Africans have been fully vaccinated for example as of late last month, according to the WHO - far below the 70% target needed by mid-year.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has said unequivocally that Omicron will not be the final variant. A new and deadly variant wave may trigger an unexpected chapter in the ongoing story of COVID-19 and the different countries must be prepared for any eventuality. At this point however, data indicates that the pandemic phase seems to be coming to a conclusion.



Philippine College of Surgeons Foundation, Inc.  
Philippine College of Surgeons



# 48<sup>TH</sup> MIDYEAR CONVENTION TAILORED APPROACHES TO SURGERY



**MAY 5-6, 2022 (ONLINE)**  
HOSTED BY: CENTRAL LUZON CHAPTER

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# FROM THE PRESIDENT

RAMOS S. INSO, MD, FPCS



Since the time that I have been a member of the Philippine College of Surgeons, I have increasingly realized the relevance and importance of this prestigious organization of surgeons in the country. Gradually, I learned about the importance of unity in the organization at the chapter level and more so at the national level, where issues and concerns pertaining to the practice of surgery, across all subspecialty societies are discussed, deliberated and acted upon, in order to come up with what is worthwhile and best for all surgeons and most importantly beneficial to the surgical patients, especially in terms of standards of care. With this in mind and with the way the organization have been run and managed by its leaders and officers, in an atmosphere of camaraderie, I eventually developed my admiration and respect, of the highest level, for the PCS. I was then drawn into taking on more responsibilities in the chapter, and then eventually in the national committees. And before I knew it, I am already at the helm of this highly esteemed organization.

I will forever be thankful to my predecessors, the other past officers, committee chairs and members, for their wisdom and accomplishments, to the Secretariat for their hard work and of

course to all the fellows for the opportunity to serve. Fully aware of the enormous task and the responsibility that goes with it, I have accepted the challenge. But in order to carry out the main thrusts of our organization, team effort is imperative.

In my inaugural address last December 7, 2021 at the EDSA Shangri-la Hotel, where I emphasized the importance of team effort in accomplishing the tasks at hand, I did come up with the team's name, the PCS TEAM 2022, citing some analogy to the game of basketball. Setting of goals or aspirations are therefore mandatory, in order to guide all the committees and chapters towards the same direction to achieve them and to steer this organization to greater heights and more relevance to its members. Thus, I spelled out my five (5) aspirations as follows:

1. Enhance the image of the PCS as truly an umbrella organization of all surgeons in the country.
2. PCS as the prime mover or major partner of the government in the formulation of policies and implementation guidelines on matters pertaining to quality healthcare

delivery, particularly involving surgical management of patients.

3. PCS as the central hub for surgical information, training standards, education and research not only in the country but in Asia and the whole world as well.
4. PCS as the source of measures that will ensure delivery of the best quality and ethical surgical care with the best outcome.
5. PCS to embark on programs that will help surgeons in their practice and make available opportunities that will help them lead comfortable lives especially when faced with unexpected challenges.

These I have shared with all the Chapter Presidents and Officers during their respective induction ceremonies and in the meetings among the Committee Chairs and Members, Subspecialty and Affiliate Society Presidents, to ensure harmony and coordination in achieving the desired goals for this year and the years to come. These should also foster collaboration among the chapters, subspecialty, specialty societies and even among the specialty divisions of the Philippine Medical Association.

Interestingly, some of the projects of the various committees, both at the chapter level and the national level, including those of the three (3) PCS Commissions have aligned with the above-mentioned aspirations, such as, the increasing participation of our friends from the subspecialty societies; the increasing number of meetings on relevant matters with government institutions and other organizations like

the DOH, PRC, PhilHealth, League of Municipalities of the Philippines, PMA, other specialty divisions, where the PCS have been invited, consulted upon and recognized as the umbrella organization of the cutting specialties; the Research Study on Cost Estimation of Medical Services and Professional Fees in the Philippines of the Adhoc Committee on UHC, chaired by former DOH Secretary, Dr Enrique Ona, is in collaboration with the Committees on Research, HMO and RVS, Finance and SURE; and the collaborative efforts of the Committees on Finance, Membership and HMO and RVS to come up with the best scheme to expand the Fellows Assistance Plan, just to name a few.

Towards the end of my message in all of the chapter inductions, I share the symbolic video produced and directed by my son, Dr. Ronan Chris J. Inso, also a PCS Fellow, where I go for the goal in a very dimly lit basketball court. The video signifies resilience and our capability to still go for the goal and make it, even during the darkest moments of our lives. To me, this is a fitting challenge for all the members of the PCS as we went through the trying times during the pandemic.

And I often say this, as we begin to see the brighter end of the tunnel of the pandemic challenge and with the fervent hope that the new challenge the world is facing with the Ukraine-Russia war, which potentially has far-reaching consequences, will be resolved soon, we should now transition to move on with our normal lives, enhanced by the lessons we learned from the pandemic. Let us all get up and go full blast! It's game time!

# ACROSS THE BOARD

Renato R. Montenegro, MD, FPCS



**1st Board Of Regents Meeting  
(via Zoom Platform) January 15, 2022  
(Saturday) 8:00 AM-5:00 PM**

## Welcome Message by PCS President, Dr. Ramon S. Inso:

Dr. Inso welcomed the 2022 Board of Regents and presented his plans for the year.

- Enhance the image of the PCS as truly an umbrella organization of all surgeons in the country. Enhanced recruitment of members.
- PCS as the prime mover or major partner of the government in the formulation of policies and implementation guidelines on matters pertaining to quality healthcare delivery, particularly involving surgical management of patients.
- PCS shall be the central hub for surgical information, training standards, education and research not only in the country but in Asia and even the whole world as well.
- PCS as the source of measures that will ensure delivery of the best quality and ethical surgical care with the best outcome
- PCS to embark on programs that will help surgeons in their practice and make available opportunities that will help them lead comfortable lives especially when faced with unexpected challenges.

## Matters Arising from the Minutes

- Update on the Research Study on the Cost of Surgical Care: A meeting will be scheduled with Dr Hilton Lam to discuss the updated budget for the research study.
- Ad-Hoc Committee on Medical Act: The Board approved to continue the existence of the Ad-hoc Committee on Medical Act with Dr. George G. Lim as Chair and the Presidents of the specialty divisions as members.

## Reminders on the Duties & Responsibilities of a Regent

- The Regents were provided a copy of their Duties and Responsibilities and this was reiterated during the meeting.

## Treasurer's Report

- The treasurer, Dr Villaflor presented the summary of the financial report as of December 31, 2021.
- A suggestion to include in the Treasurer's Report, a column indicating the budget per Committee was made.

## Committee on Internal Audit

- The Committee conducted a physical inventory of the College's and Foundation's property last December 22, 2021 and submitted its report.
- The net value of the Office Equipment and Furniture & Fixtures based on the Audited Interim Financial Statement as of September 30, 2021 are detailed as follows:

Philippine College of Surgeons (PCS)	PhP 278,836.88
Philippine College of Surgeons Foundation (PCSF)	260,011.27
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>PhP 538,848.15</b>

- All office equipment, furniture and fixtures were intact and accounted for.

## Conventions Committee

- A detailed evaluation of the recently concluded 77th Annual Clinical Congress was done with focus on the following: online registration and the problems encountered; the online opening ceremonies; and the scientific program.
- Several suggestions were made to improve the online business meeting.
- Plans for the 48th MYC and the 78th ACC were presented and approved.

## Committee on CSE

- The recently concluded 77th Annual Clinical Congress; December 5-9, 2021 was discussed and the distribution of the registrants (Fellows, Residents, Guests, etc) was presented.
- The plans for the 78th ACC and the proposed list of foreign speakers were presented.

## Trauma, Injury, Burn Commission

- The contents of the TIBCC FB page and the Siklista TIBCC FB group was presented.

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- The 1st Commission Webinar on “Trauma Care in the Time of the Omicron Surge” was discussed.

#### **Committee on HMO**

- The Board approved, in principle, the new MOA with PAHMOC provided that the effectivity will be for a year and that it will undergo annual review.

#### **Committee on SURE / SURE Commission**

- The SPSA-PCS SURE Commission Surgical Mission Fellow Rural Surgery Program has drafted a MOA and is for review.
- The Mangatarem Surgical Outreach held December 13-16, 2021 was presented: This was in partnership with the World Surgical Foundation Philippines (WSFP). Other organizations involved included: the Philippine Association of Laparoscopic and Endoscopic Surgeons, Philippine Academy of Family Physicians and the PCS-Sub-Committee on Primary Care. Venues: MBP-Blessed Trinity General Hospital, Mangatarem, Pangasinan and Dagupan Doctors Villaflor Memorial Hospital (for the laparoscopic procedures). 140 patients were managed surgically (40 major, 100 minor operations)
- The ongoing efforts for Typhoon Odette Relief Operations were discussed.

#### **2022 Committees and Committee Members**

- The Board approved the Regents-in-charge, Committee Chairs and Members who were newly appointed or re-appointed
- The subspecialty societies were requested to submit their representatives in some Committees.
- The Board approved to retain the Joint Accreditation Council (JAC).
- The Council of Surgical Subspecialty Boards of the Philippines (CSSBP) and the reason for its creation in 2019 was briefly described.
- The Board approved the creation of a Sub-committee on Webinars, under the Committee on CSE, chaired by Dr. Raymond Joseph Manzo.

**2nd Board of Regents Meeting  
(via Zoom Platform) February 12, 2022  
(Saturday) 8:00 AM-5:00 PM**

#### **President’s Update**

- Adhoc Com. On UHC meeting –January 21, 2022: The MOA for the reserch study which will be reviewed by the PCS legal counsel will be between the College and Tambalista. The possibility of funding by the ADB through the office of Dr Eduardo Banzon was noted. Once the MOA is signed, the amount of Php30K will be released to Tambalista for the ERB expense.

- Meeting DOH HHRDB – January 24, 2022: The Proposed Revised Guidelines on the Issuance of NTC to Filipino Physicians under the Exchange Visitor Program was discussed. The DOH requests the subspecialty societies to submit the list of available training programs and their respective curricula/ programs.
- PMA Emergency Meeting – February 3, 2022: Updates on the Vaccination for Children ages 5-11 years were discussed. Various concerns with PhilHealth were discussed. PMA candidates for vice president, Regent Dures Fe E. Tagayuna and Dr. Hector M. Santos, Jr. were mentioned.
- PRC-BOM Meeting – February 8, 2022: Physicians Act. The purpose of the meeting was to unify the stand of the specialty societies on the Physician’s Act. The meeting was presided by PRC BOM member, Dr. Godofreda Dalmacion. Dr. George Lim presented the output of the PCS with the Presidents of the Specialty Divisions in 2021 using the version of Sen. Win Gatchalian. Dr. Dalmacion was provided a copy of the Specialty Divisions’ proposed version of the Physicians Act. The next meeting was scheduled for February 15, 2022.
- PMA-CPS Meeting – February 9, 2022: Application of Cosmetic & Aesthetic Societies as PMA affiliate societies. A meeting was scheduled by the PMA-CPS regarding the application of the Philippine Federation of Cosmetic Surgeons as an affiliate society of the PMA. The Board emphasized that the PAPRAS was the only recognized Plastic surgery society by the PCS and PMA.
- DOH-TWG Lifestage (formerly Standards of Care): The DOH through the office of Dr. Neil Kho has informed the College of the members of the Lifestage TWG, namely: Drs. Domingo Bongala, Jr., Rex Madrigal, Jorge Concepcion, and Alejandro Dizon.

#### **Treasurer’s Report**

- The treasurer, Dr. VJP Villaflor, III informed the Board that the AIA Philamlife Money Tree Elite (with face amount of Php5M) was not a profitable venture and that the Board decided to withdraw said investment.

#### **Board of Governors**

- Elected Officers  
Chair: Dr. Robert B. Bandolon  
Vice Chair: Dr. Roberto A. Sarmiento  
Secretary: Dr. Manuel S. Tesoro, Jr.
- Representatives to the Commissions:  
Cancer – Dr. Ron R. Del Mar  
SURE – Dr. Alfred Q. Lasala, II  
Trauma, Injury & Burn Care – Dr. Peter S. Quiaioit

### **Committee on Finance**

- The PCS Treasurer who is a member of the Committee on Conventions, is tasked to relay financial concerns of said committee to the Finance committee.
- The following investments were being reviewed:  
To hold investments in equity (AXA Philippines, Sunlife Grepa) and wait for the investment to recover  
To pull out investments with Prulife U.K. amounting to PhP10M and Sunlife Asset Management Corp. amounting to PhP5M
- A meeting with the Finance Committee, FAP Committee and HMO Committee is being finalized to discuss the FAP retirement fund. The Committee is currently waiting for the actuarial studies before submitting the initial proposal for the program.

### **Committee on PCS Building**

- The increase in rental rates for non-PCS-society tenants was approved. There will be no escalation for PCS-society tenants; escalation will be implemented by Year 2.
- The PCS Building Committee will meet with Mr. Martin Gumayan (Mercury Drug) for initial talks regarding Mercury Drug's plan to occupy the first floor of the PCS Bldg.
- The contract of FLOREX will no longer be renewed effective July 16, 2022
- The Board approved to offer the AFN the 3/F office space previously occupied by the PCS MMC.
- The Board approved the arrangements between Meralco and new tenants regarding their deposit.
- Purchase of 32" CCTV monitor for the guard house replacing the one purchased in 2018 was approved.

### **Committee on Hospital Standardization and Accreditation**

- The committee will participate in the 78th Annual Clinical Congress on December 4-7, 2022; Edsa Shangri-la Hotel
- The Committee meeting budget for food: PhP500./ member was approved

### **Committee on HMO/RVS**

- The MOA with AHMOPI and PAHMOC has been approved. The MOA's duration will still be three (3) years and will be reviewed by the Liaison Committee annually and will adopt whatever changes will apply in the succeeding years.
- The Liaison Committee members include: Dr. Fernando L. Lopez as Chair with Dr. Albert P. Paulino and Dr. Joselito M. Mendoza as members from PCS.
- The revised MOA for both AHMOPI and PAHMOC will still use the RVS 2009 considering the current health situation in the country. The Fellows will be informed about this.

### **Committee on Trauma**

- The Role and Function of the different trauma groups (Committee on Trauma, TIBCC, and PSST) were defined.
- Forthcoming activities (ATLS, BEST-online, BETTER: face-to-face, and BURN online) with corresponding dates were approved.
- Disaster Preparedness Meetings with chapter representatives were approved.

### **Trauma, Injury and Burn Care Commission**

- The following will be submitted to the PCSF for approval: To have a representative or members from PCS Chapters to every TIBCC Cluster (Resource Generation Group, Legislation Group, Communication Group, and Training and Education Group); To name the PCSF-TIBCC next webinar as Dr. Hawthorne N. Bañez Memorial Trauma Lecture; To conduct TIBCC Board Meeting monthly and Business Meeting quarterly.
- The Facebook page of the Commission has now 7,421 followers as of February 2022.
- The Siklista TIBCC FB group has now 991 members.
- TIBCC 2nd Webinar Lecture: Topic - Trauma Care in the Time of Omicron Surge, January 26, 2022 6:00 PM via Zoom platform
- The new Board of the TIBCC will include: Jose Antonio M. Salud, MD, Dures Fe E. Tagayuna, MD, Atty. Joel U. Macalino, MD, Teodoro J. Herbosa, MD (Chairman of the Board), Alejandro Y. Tan, MD (PMA), Richard Henry S. Santos, MD (PCEM), Rolando Gerardo F. Dela Cruz, MD (PSST), Col. (Dr.) Fatima Claire Navarro (AFP), Jorge M. Concepcion, MD (Comm on Trauma)

### **Committee on Cancer / Cancer Commission**

- The following programs were presented: CANCER SURGERY QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM, CANCER SURGERY COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND SERVICES PROGRAM, CANCER SURGERY OUTCOMES REVIEW PROGRAM

### **Committee on SURE / SURE Commission**

- Dr. Beda R. Espineda will be endorsed to the PCS Foundation as the new commission director.
- The MOA for the SPSA-PCS SURE Commission Surgical Mission Fellow Rural Surgery Program is being finalized.
- The Typhoon Odette Relief Operations were discussed.
- Renewal of the MOAs with the following organizations was discussed: World Surgical Foundation Philippines (WSFP), League of Municipalities of the Philippines

(LMP), Philippine Society of Anesthesiologists, periOperative Registered Nurses Association of the Philippines (ORNAP)

#### **Committee on Surgical Infections**

- The Committee will be endorsing the SSI training kit to the Committee on Surgical Training for possible adoption and dissemination to all the training programs.
- Three webinars will be conducted in cooperation with the Committee on CSE.
- A proposal for a Multicenter Research was presented.
- The Board requested the committee to study the possibility of creating the Infection Commission.

#### **Committee on Conventions**

- The president of the Central Luzon Chapter, Dr Noelito Lacsamana presented the plans for the 48th Midyear Convention.
- The Board approved Thoughts & Notion as the event organizer/online provider for the 48th MYC.
- The Committee on Finance initially presented their recommended fees for the MYC.
- The 78th Annual Clinical Congress – December 4-7, 2022; at Edsa Shangri-La Hotel is planned to be a face-to-face meeting.
- The committee is now accepting bids for the 49th Midyear Convention 2023
- Possible venues for the 79th Annual Clinical Congress 2023 have been identified.

#### **Committee on Continuing Surgical Education**

- The list of foreign speakers was presented and is for endorsement to the PCSF
- The composition of the new CSE committee was presented with Dr Alfred Phillip O. de Dios, MD as chairman.
- The program for the MYC was discussed

#### **Committee on Surgical Research**

- The committee will participate in the forthcoming 78th Annual Clinical Congress in December.
- The Board approved the inclusion of Dr. Billie Mante as member of the committee

#### **Committee on Surgical Training**

- The Board approved the proposed webinar on “Writing and Presenting a Case Report”.
- The Board suggested for the committee to look into the possibility of PCS developing an Undergraduate Surgical Education Curriculum (USEC).

#### **Committee on Membership**

- The Board approved the various strategies proposed by the committee to entice the Fellows of the subspecialty societies to apply to the PCS.

- The College will recognize fellows with achievements other than those related to the surgical profession.
- A webinar on “Navigating thru Surgical Practice for New Fellows” and “Starting a Provincial Practice” was approved.

#### **Committee on Ethics**

- The board secretary will draft a letter addressing the issue raised by Dr Libao of Maxicare to clarify that their complaint should be settled internally between the involved surgeon and Maxicare.

#### **Committee on Administrative Concerns**

- The board approved the granting of the 2019 annual convention bonus which is equivalent to one month’s salary for Eden Paule, Emma Infante, Connie David, Bel Limjoco and Eduardo Cincua. This shall be endorsed to the PCSF.
- The board approved the 2021 incentive bonus for Ms. Annette D. Tolentino and Ms. Cora P. Ribao for exemplary performance based on their performance evaluation.

#### **Committee on External Affairs and Public Relations**

- The PCS will support the Philippine Society of Gastroenterology in their annual celebration of Philippine Digestive Health Week scheduled from March 6-12, 2022.
- The PCS will participate in the webinars of the Philippine Society of Fertility by providing speakers.
- The MoA with Kapwa Ko Mahal Ko has been renewed. The monthly surgical topics / advocacies to be highlighted by KKMKF during their broadcast program were identified.
- The PCS thru Dr. Aison will partner with the DZRH station for a continuing Sunday broadcast of the radio program “ANG GALING MO DOC”.

#### **Committee on Publications**

- Additional members to the committee was approved. Ad Hoc Committee on SICT
- The PCS app may now be downloaded via Google Play or the AppStore. The committee is wanting of feedback from the Fellows regarding the app.

#### **Committee on Patient Safety & Quality Assurance**

- The committee’s participation in the 48th MYC and the 78th ACC was approved.
- The Specialty Societies’ representatives to the Committee include: Euvin G. Lagapa, MD (AFN), Marcelino T. Cadag (POA), Brian Christopher U. Ang (PAPRAS)

#### **Council of Surgical Sub-specialty Boards of the Philippines (CSSBP)**

- The newly elected officers and Board were presented.

- The Board APPROVED the collaboration between the CSSBP, the Committee on Quality Assurance & Patient Safety and the Committee on Hospital Standardization & Accreditation to discuss the matter on Re-certification.

**3rd Board of Regents Meeting  
(Face-to-face, GT Singian Board Room)  
March 12, 2022 (Saturday); 8:00 am-5:00pm**

**President's Update**

- Adhoc Committee on UHC: The College's legal counsel has edited the draft of the MOA with Tambalista. The ownership of said research study is the College. This study may be used as reference by the various stakeholders to determine the appropriate cost of surgical care.
- 1st Quarterly Meeting with the Presidents of Surgical Specialty Societies (February 15) was well attended and the dialogue was very productive.
- Chapter Inductions held:
  - \* Cebu-EV Chapter – February 9 (Online)
  - \* Metro Manila Chapter – February 12 (Online)
  - \* Davao-SM Chapter – February 19 (Online)
  - \* Southern Tagalog Chapter – February 26 (F2F)
  - \* Cordillera Chapter – March 5 (Hybrid)
  - \* Panay Chapter (Online; Dialogue only)-March 17
  - \* Central Luzon Chapter – March 26 (F2F w/ ocular of MYC venue)
  - \* Negros Island Chapter – April 2 (Hybrid)
  - \* North Eastern Luzon Chapter – March 25 (Online)
  - \* Northern Luzon Chapter – April 30 (Hybrid)
  - \* Bicol Chapter (for scheduling)
  - \* Northern Mindanao Chapter (for scheduling)
- Overseas Invitations were received from: the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons – May 2-6; Brisbane, Australia, and the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh – May 30-June 1; Edinburgh, Scotland.

**Treasurer's Report**

- The Regents suggested pulling out high-risk investments and transferring them temporarily with Union Bank. Some of these high-risk investments are those with Philamlife, Sunlife and AIA, and Prulife.

**Committee on Finance**

- The Committee presented the Zalamea Actuarial Study for approximately 2,000 Fellows. The amount of Php150K for said study was approved.

**Committee on PCS Building**

- The Board formally approved to offer the amount of Php1,500./sqm for the 203 sqm office area at the ground floor to Mercury Drug.

- The AVENTUS & New World COVID Triage tents have been taken down as the NCR is in COVID Alert Level 1

**Committee on Fellows Assistance Plan (FAP)**

- The committee awaits the Actuarial Study to determine the feasibility of the "Expanded FAP" program

**Committee on HMO/RVS**

- The committee finalized the letters and documents as a result of the new MoA with PAHMOC and AHMOPI to be sent to the Fellows.

**Committee on Trauma**

- The educational workshops of the committee were approved and the dates identified.
- The details of the committee's participation in the forthcoming MYC and ACC were presented and approved.

**Trauma, Injury and Burn Care Commission**

- The Board noted the changes in the Operations Manual of the TIBCC and suggested to pattern it on the Cancer Commission's Operations Manual for uniformity.
- The Board proposed the registration of the TIBCC to the SEC.

**Cancer Committee**

- The committee presented their program for the forthcoming MYC and ACC.

**SURE Commission / SURE Committee**

- In celebration of the PCS Foundation day in September, the board approved the creation of a PCS National Surgery Outreach Day (by PCS Chapters and different subspecialty societies). The different chapters and subspecialty societies will conduct simultaneous surgical operations, aptly called "86 charity operations @86" during the celebration of the Foundation day.
- The "Klinika ng Bayan" program will be revived in collaboration with the PAFP.

**Committee on Surgical Infections**

- A webinar on anti-microbial stewardship in surgery was presented.
- The SSI Training Kit was presented and will be endorsed to the Committee on Surgical Training.
- The Board APPROVED the proposed poster on P.R.E.A.C.H.
- The committees' forthcoming webinars and participation in the MYC and ACC were presented.
- The committee in coordination with the Committee

on Surgical Research will undertake a research study on the Compliance and Adherence to National Antibiotic Guidelines.

#### **Committee on Conventions**

- The Central Luzon Chapter received notice from the Pharmaceutical Association of the Philippines endorsing the Clark Marriott Hotel as the site for the Mid Year convention in May.
- The Committee recommended to increase the reservation with Marriott Hotel from 50 persons to 100 persons.
- The pre-convention activities were presented. These include: Golf, “Food Crawl”, Biking, Basketball, and the welcome dinner. Only Fellows who registered for the convention may join these activities.
- The program for the MYC Opening Ceremonies and the Fellowship night were presented.
- The face-to-face format for the ACC in December was approved.

#### **Committee on Continuing Surgical Education**

- The final scientific program and schedule for the 48th Midyear Convention was presented and approved.
- The Board APPROVED the 8 foreign speakers for the 78th Annual Clinical Congress with the corresponding cost of their plane fares.
- The Board approved the theme “SURGERY AND UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE” for the 2023 Midyear Convention.
- The Board APPROVED a new set of members for the Sub-committee on ACC (2023)

#### **Sub-committee on Primary Care**

- The Sub-committee is revising the 4th Edition of the Primary Care Surgery Handbook. The articles/chapters and corresponding authors were presented.

#### **PAFP Workshop**

- The PAFP will conduct a workshop on Acute Wound Care and has sent a proposal to the Sub-committee on Primary Care Surgery for collaboration on the conduct of the surgical aspect of the workshop.
- Several issues and concerns were raised on the methodology and evaluation.
- A meeting with the PAFP is scheduled.

#### **Sub-committee on Webinars**

- The schedule of webinars were presented including those that utilized the Docquity app.

#### **Committee on Research**

- The research contest, “Champion of Champions” will push through during the 78th Annual Clinical Congress 2022 and may include a Fellows category.

- A Free Paper Session during the ACC will be conducted. Such will include papers that have been presented in international fora.
- The committee has submitted to the DOH the list of PCS EBCPGs for possible updating.
- The Healthcare Resource Study was presented.

#### **Committee on Surgical Training**

- The Committee presented the final program for its 1st CST Webinar for 2022 entitled “ABCs of a Case Report: How to Write, Present & Publish”
- The participation in the 78th Annual Clinical Congress will be on the topic of Undergraduate Surgical Education Curriculum (USEC) & 7th Grand Rounds Interesting Case Presentation

#### **Nominations Committee**

- The composition of the nominations committee, its task, and the time table were discussed.
- A search sub-committee whose members come from the PCS Chapters and subspecialty societies was defined.
- The Composition of the Committee on Nominations 2022 include: Alejandro C. Dizon, MD (Chairman), George G. Lim, MD, Jose Antonio M. Salud, MD, Antonio S. Say, MD, Ramon S. Inso, MD, Robert B. Bandolon, MD (BOG Chair)

#### **Committee on Membership**

- The Board APPROVED to send out letters to Sub Specialty Societies to inform them of the Simplified Application for PCS Fellowship.
- The Board APPROVED reducing the number years required from 5 years to 3 years in order to qualify for the PCS Simplified Application.
- The Board tasked the committee to review the regular application for PCS Fellowship.
- The Board is welcome to sending a representative to attend the Business meetings of the subspecialty societies if invited.

#### **Committee on Administrative Concerns**

- The request by the PCS Messenger, Aldrin Gasingan, for the repair of his motorcycle in the amount of Php2,700.00 was approved

#### **Committee on Publications**

- The 48th MYC Poster and AVP proposals were presented and approved.
- The revision of the PCS Hymn 2022 is underway and changes will include the activities of the 2021 BOR and Chapter activities for the 1st half and PCS Chapter Induction photos or videos for the 2nd half.

### Committee on Patient Safety & Quality Assurance

- The study on Measuring Surgical Quality using Philhealth eClaims Data is underway as Philhealth provided the data that was requested. The Board approved the hiring of a data scientist to analyze the data.
- The Board approved requesting the specialty societies for a slot during their respective conventions on the topic “Quality Assurance and Patient Safety”.
- The Committee will coordinate with ORNAP to inquire regarding the compliance by operating room nurses with the modified safety checklist. The DOH had issued Circular No. 2021-0576 last December 23, 2021 endorsing the PCS Modified WHO Surgical

Safety Checklist for implementation in all government hospitals.

### Other Matters

- The Board was updated on the current health situation of Past President, Dr. Armando C. Crisostomo who suffered an ischemic stroke. As stated in the FAP policy, Dr. Crisostomo’s health condition is considered a total disability; the Board approved releasing his FAP benefit in the amount of PhP50K.
- The Board approved the payment for the PSGS raffle tickets amounting to 40k pesos.
- The Board reminded everyone of the PMA elections on March 13, 2022



**MOA Signing** The Philippine College of Surgeons has tapped Hilton Lam, MHA, PhD., (insert photo), Director of the Institute of Health Policy and Development Studies, National Institutes of Health, University of the Philippines Manila as its lead author and researcher for the paper “Cost-estimation of Medical Services and Professional Fees in the Philippines”. This is a project of the Ad Hoc Committee on the UHC which chaired by Dr. Enrique T. Ona, former Department of Health and Past President of the PCS (1990).

The signing of the Memorandum of Agreement between PCS and Dr. Lam took place on April 18, 2022 at the Valle Verde Country Club.

## COLLEGE NEWS

# 77th PCS Annual Clinical Congress “Enveloped Ideas: Intricacies in Decision Making”

• Marcus Jose B. Brillantes, MD, FPCS, FPSGS •

The Philippine College of Surgeons held its 77th Annual Clinical Congress online from December 5 – 9, 2021. This was due to the continuing healthcare crisis brought by the pandemic which saw another variant surge during that period. The Congress' general objective was to discuss the complexities in decision making to improve surgical outcomes and its aims were to present surgeons the current evaluation, management and best practices in the treatment of various diseases among the different surgical subspecialties, recent evaluation algorithms, management and updates on the best approaches to the various surgical conditions. The roster of distinguished local and international guest speakers, surgical society presidents and representatives from the ASEAN region, faculty members from Europe and the American College of Surgeons shared their knowledge and expertise in the online convention.

The Annual Clinical Congress was formally declared opened by Dr. Antonio S. Say, 2021 PCS President during the Opening Ceremonies hosted by Dr. Ma. Concepcion C. Vesagas, PCS Board Secretary. Dr. Ramon S. Inso, PCS 2021 Vice-President and

Over-All Chair of the 2021 Annual Clinical Congress officially welcomed the dignitaries, officials and guests to the annual congress. Dr. Rhoel C. de Leon, the Chair of the Committee on Membership, presented the year's Candidates for Fellowship during the Induction Ceremonies which followed shortly after.

The Annual Election of the 2022 PCS Board of Regents was conducted from December 6 – 8 via online platform. The PCS 2022 Board of Regents are the following: Ramon S. Inso, MD (President), Maria Concepcion C. Vesagas, MD (Vice President), Vivencio Jose P. Villafior III, MD (Treasurer), Renato R. Montenegro, MD (Secretary) other regents are Drs. Ma. Luisa D. Aquino, Jose Ravelo T. Bartolome, Domingo S. Bongala, Jr., Jose Rhoel C. De Leon, Rodney B. Dofitas, Esperanza R. Lahoz, Rex A. Madrigal, Orlando O. Ocampo, Alberto P. Paulino, Jr., Manuel Francisco T. Roxas and Dures Fe T. Tagayuna.

The ACC 2021 Fellowship Night was held on December 5, 2021 as a virtual event with the title “Paskong Siruhano Panalo” with Drs. Dale Avellanosa, Ferdie Syfu & Roel Peña as hosts.



# PCS Signs MOA with AHMOPI Anew Negotiations with PAHMOC Underway

• Joy Grace G. Jerusalem, MD, FPCS, FPSGS •

The Philippine College of Surgeons has signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Association of Health Maintenance Organizations of the Philippines, Inc. (AHMOPI) that stipulates a 15-point increase in the multiplier utilizing the 2009 RVS for PCS Fellows in good standing. The MOA, signed last March 3, 2022, covers the period between January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2024.

All professional surgical fees will be based on the current Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PHIC) Relative Value Scale following a 4-tiered multiplier for surgical professional fees that will be paid by the HMOs in behalf of their patients as follows:

	MOA 2019-2021	MOA 2022-2024
Ward/ Out-patient	P 125	P 140
Semi-private	P 130	P 145
Private	P 135	P 150
Suite	P 140	P 155

The rate increment also applies to daily visit fees for surgical patients admitted into the hospital but are not operated. The surgical compensation schemes are inclusive of two days pre-operative and five days of post-operative visits.

Outpatient consultation fees for the specialist is Php 600 regardless of their place of practice, while tele consult fee was pegged at Php 400.

The MOA provides for the right of AMHOPI patients to choose specialists who are Fellows or Diplomates of the PCS and/ or its affiliated surgical specialty societies even if the specialists are outside of the HMO's current network of

	MOA 2019-2021	MOA 2022-2024
Ward/ Out-patient	P 600	P 700
Semi-private	P 750	P 850
Private	P 850	P 1000
Suite	P 1200	P 1300
ICU	P 1400	P 1500

accredited physicians, but nevertheless accredited by, or have visiting privileges with, the hospital where the surgery is to be performed. Pursuant to the MOA, only Fellows who have consented to; applied for; and have been credentialed by the PCS; and approved and issued a Unified Service Agreement by the AMHOPI may avail.

Another MOA is being finalized with the Philippine Association of Health Maintenance Organization Companies, Inc. (PAHMOC).

Application sheets are provided in the PCS Fellows Community Viber Group and may be downloaded from the PCS website. Fellows and Diplomates may fill up the forms electronically and send the completed forms to the secretariat@pcs.org.ph. Specialists who sign up early will have a higher likelihood of approval and utilization of the new rates.

# Mountain

• Vietrez David Abella, MD, FPCS, FPSGS •

“...For truly I tell you,  
if you have faith the size of a mustard seed,  
you will say to this mountain,  
'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.”  
– Matthew 17:201

What is it about mountains that almost never fails to inspire awe in people?

In the very region where I have been based for the past twenty-five years, I am still awe-struck every time I see *Daragang Magayon* up close.

Mountains have been mentioned over 500 times in the Bible. “Considered to be places “close to God,” mountains and hills have had great significance for Jewish and Christian cultures.”<sup>2</sup>

Among the most significant mountains in the scriptures is the Mount of Beatitudes, said to be the location of the public initiation of the Christ's mission:

“When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against

you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”  
(Matthew 5:1-12)

Words of which promises are very hard to hold on to. How many of us, poor in spirit and crushed by the death of a patient by our surgical hands, feel that, contrarily, we are far from the kingdom of heaven?

How many of us have mourned for family, or colleague, or patient, and have not been comforted, even by the passing of so much time?

How many of us have meekly stood by corrupted people who have, election after election, inherited the government? How many of us have hungered, and thirsted, and hungered, and thirsted, and hungered, and thirsted for righteousness, and have remained unsatiated? How many times have we forgiven those who trespassed against us, but have not been forgiven by those we have trespassed?

How many of us cry for peace, but live out our days through war upon war?

If these promises are hard to accept, let us look further to Jesus, and hear the words he said, when he hung from the cross atop the mountain of calvary.

Didn't He show us the supreme act of mercy when He said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing (Luke 23:34),” referring to the people who persecuted Him and called for His crucifixion and death?

Does not His declaration to the repentant thief, hanging on a cross at His side, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise (Luke 23:43),” open up the kingdom to the poor in spirit?

When He comforted His mother, Mary, and His beloved disciple, John, by sharing them with one another: “Woman, here is your son,” and “Here is your mother (John 19: 26 – 27),” isn’t He comforting us as well, to whom He gives His very own mother as guide and mediatrix?

Isn’t He the exemplary of meekness when He cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me (Matthew 27:46)?” And have not His followers inherited the earth these past two thousand years?

Wasn’t Jesus filled, when He said “I am thirsty (John 19:28),” and was raised from the dead after three days?

Jesus surrendered His pure heart to the Father with the words, “It is finished (John 19:30).” And by the ultimate declaration of peace, “Father, into Your hands, I commend my Spirit (Luke 23:46),” He calls all of us to be children of God.

As I write, the Christian world is wrapping up the season of Lent, and the Philippine elections would be upon us when this article comes to light. Our Lord strengthens us against the evil we endure: “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is

great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Let us discern the words on the walls and the cries of our people, that we may know what kind of leaders our country needs to guide us into righteousness. Christ shed blood just agonizing over His Passion and God’s will for Him.

Let us proclaim the truth, even if it leads to bashing, and foul-mouthed trashing. Jesus endured terrible scourging and 525 painful wounds to save us.

Let us wear our color and be seen, engaging ever so mildly those who hold on to words of straw, for the future of our government, and Filipinos, shall be fatefully sealed on that election day. They sarcastically declared Jesus as “King,” and spat upon Him, hit His the head many times, and crowned Him with thorns.

Let us take up the Cross as enlightened electorate. Our reward will be great in heaven. And if on this 2022 elections we put in place the right people, we may even taste a little heaven on earth.

<sup>1</sup> All scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition

<sup>2</sup> The Ten: Most significant mountains in the Bible, [record.adventistchurch.com](http://record.adventistchurch.com)



# Facebook and Faceblocked

• Tamarah P. Cristobal, M.D., DPBS •



“Dapat ba lahat ng tanong ko sayo may bayad muna bago moko replayan?”

This private message almost threw me over the edge of my seat. And it was not even addressed to me. But my insides were fuming with words that I cannot even publish. This was a private message that one of my doctor friends from another specialty, received from a certain patient while attending to another patient. He shared with me this message together with the frustration and obvious pain that came along with it. For starters, my friend is known to be one of the kindest and generous doctors around. And the amount of patient that he sees per day leaves him a little time for himself and for his family because he was just that dedicated to his craft and his patients. To say that he is tremendously hardworking is an understatement for he often continues his consults via telemedicine at home when it could have been his time to be doing something else for himself. After receiving this message, I can feel the frustration and the disappointment in his voice and it seems like a part of his mellow soul separated from his entire being. Gone was the gentle and soft spoken voice and out came a quivering, sad, and bitter tone.

That person was not even a formal patient of his, but a mere acquaintance during his grade school years, who later on found him on Facebook and became so fond of messaging and asking for medical advice to which he always answers and accommodates without hesitation and without any form of compensation for the service that he provided. That particular day, the said person decided to call him numerous times repeatedly to which he was not able to answer because he was preoccupied with his admitted patients right in front of him.

Personally, if I was calling someone and they did not answer the first time, I would get the hint that that person is probably busy and the next prudent thing to do is to message that person with my concern and ask permission if I can call at his/her free time. Apparently this patient has been messaging him

if she can call but since he was preoccupied with hospital work at numerous hospitals and driving himself around the entire day, this person's messages remained unanswered and much to that person's aggression, she let out another series of calls and then sent that ill fated message.

My friend then decided to answer the call and much to his surprise he was not greeted with an apology but with an angry tone. When asked what the matter was and if it was an emergency, he was answered with an angry, “YES! It's an emergency”. He then asked for understanding that he was with another patient and talking to another colleague. He was told that it was considered an “emergency” for her and the amusing part of it all was that it was not even her private emergency but a cousin of hers who was already at the hospital and she just wants to ask some questions. My left eyebrow did an anti gravity thing and almost reached my scalp out of astonishment. I could have sworn that I almost offered to talk to that person and give her a piece of my mind. I just could not believe that such audacity exists and how cruel people can be if their wants are not met. A little consideration for someone who has been so nice and professional without asking for anything in return is not too much to ask from a human being.

Fortunately and thankfully, my friend remembered who he was. That he was not just an ordinary acquaintance to some people but he is a Physician and a respected Fellow of his specialty and subspecialty at that.

He stood his ground and had a heated but a clam and respectful exchange of words on his part and explained that he has been patient enough with unnecessary consults and that he needs to be given the consideration and respect that he should be given to him because he was a busy man. It was nice of him to not even mention that he was not charging her a single centavo for all the free consults and time that

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he spent answering her queries and just let it up to fate to make her decipher on her own volition how uncalled for her message was. After that, he decided to permanently block that person from every social media and get over the fact that he was just treated with disrespect that he did not deserve.

From Facebook consults, now she was Faceblocked. It was a good call on his part and he had been rid of one stressor that is not even giving him any type of benefit. I must say that his mental health went up five points by simply clicking the block button.

Thirteen words was all it took to break down the spirit of someone who has devoted his entire career to making sure his patients feel that they are loved and cared for. He's probably feeling that even if he is giving it his all and his best work, some patients still feel that he is doing an inadequate job. He told me that he is tired and burned out. He spent the entire day talking and treating patients but a single blow could make you feel insignificant in an instant. Like you owed everyone your time and expertise and expect that if you ask for compensation, you are a heartless person. I felt the anger transcend towards me and I felt miserable for him and for the entire medical community. I have never had the unfortunate moment of receiving such hate from a patient and if ever I did, it would definitely crush me and leave me heartbroken.

I guess I am not the only doctor who gives out their personal number to patients. Though I have been warned many times by other colleagues not to give away my personal number and give my secretary's number instead, I still give it out to certain patients. Those being post operative patients who I believe needed my help more than anyone else when it comes to their recovery. I would rather that they message me with regards to their status rather than them resulting to consulting Google because I was not within reach. I believe that their road to recovery is still part of my treatment and my secretary is used to me not charging anything to post op patients for as long as I am treating part of their operative journey. Whether it lasts for a week to 3 months, and sometimes up to a year, it has been my personal promise to myself that I will give as much service as I can because the main reason that I wanted to be a surgeon was to help others and make them feel better.

Sometimes I go beyond what is my duty as their doctor and help them out outside the hospital especially for those patients who grew close to my heart. Laughable as it sounds, I was even invited to some of my cancer patient's funerals because the family is thankful and gracious enough to recognize my efforts and they want to introduce me to some of their friends and families. I find that medicine is not all about grades and top scores but part of what makes your career fulfilling and successful is how you connect and interact with the people around you. There are a lot of good hearted people out there and I have been fortunate enough to be blessed with wonderful patients who recognize my efforts and skills and I have been showered with appreciation sometimes more than what I feel I deserve. I would like to think that how I treat my patients reflect the way they treat me but let me be honest here and say that all doctors treat their patients well but sadly, not all patients treat their doctors well even if they are given an excellent service.

It is not even a matter of compensation because we treat our charity patients the same manner and sometimes with more gusto because our compassionate side overpowers our practical side especially when our charity patients show us some love. Though short of money, they would even go out of their way to give small tokens of appreciation be it handwritten notes or a pack of cookies. I always keep the notes from my patients and place it in a box that I call my box of treasures. It keeps me grounded and reminds me what my calling is and to always look out for the benefit of my patients regardless if my service is compensated for or not.

But those thirteen words were like a collection of samurai swords that could break the spirit of any doctor to continue to serve jubilantly. I saw first hand how it hurt one of the kindest and compassionate doctors that I know. While doing a service to a patient, another patient painted him as nothing more than someone who just works for the money.

It is a harrowing thing and I am pretty sure and I got the vibe that it made him feel like he wanted to distance himself from patients and be selective from now on and rid himself of toxic people which is equally heartbreaking because it kind of defeats the purpose of wanting to serve. But sometimes, our mental health is taking a toll on us and the very people who should serve as inspirations sometimes

serves as inspirations for us to push the block button more often.

Given today's time and easy access to a lot of information, am I the only one who feels that medicine and doctors are not treated fairly and respectfully the way they used to back then? A simple click of a mouse and people can get any information they want and act like they got an automatic medical degree from Google. Social media apps can make our service more accessible to patients which is great but it also poses the possibility of our privacy being taken away from us any time of the day. I once had a patient call me repeatedly at 3am only to ask if hospitals offer RT PCR testing. And the clincher is, he is already at the hospital and he wanted to ask me first before asking the hospital staff. Though it is an awesome time to be alive with all the technology nowadays, it is equally difficult as well in some ways. While it is making it easy for us virtually attend to patients and conferences, it also poses a problem to a lot of doctors who are being victims of being diminished to someone who must heed to any whim at the right price, and sometimes even pro bono.

While I do believe that our calling is to serve, it is also our right to be compensated for the service that we provided. But more than that compensation, I feel that it is our right to be given the respect and consideration that we deserve because we are catering to multiple people in a day and giving the best possible service that we can give. Being a doctor is no easy feat and though we are not complaining because this is what we chose we to do, a little compassion and understanding that could be rendered to us means a lot.

I fear that there will come a time when most of us will be burned out from all the stress and decide to focus more on our mental health and leave the practice that we once loved. This poses a problem to the future generation of doctors who would see this pattern and decide to just focus on being selective with patients and work for the compensation rather than the compassion. It would defeat the purpose of being a physician and it would further push us down the rabbit hole of feeling like an ordinary worker: just working for the money and for whatever makes us happy. And though it is hard to explain our side to our patients and most of them will continue to be that way and see us that way, we still need to choose

the higher road and pick our battles carefully. There are times when we will feel gravely defeated but I hope that we take it as a lesson learned in battle to strengthen our faith more. Faith in humanity and faith that we are all good physicians wanting the best for our patients. Though it is both a great and stressful time to be alive, we are all here for a reason and might I say, we physicians still hold one of the noblest and most fulfilling professions and I hope none of us forget that.

I have the pleasure of reading a book titled, "The Urban Monk" by Pedram Shojai and there are certain lines from a chapter that I would like to directly quote from his book because I felt that most of us need to read it to invigorate our passion every time we feel broken or stressed out with our daily battles:

"When we take a close look at ourselves, we can appreciate people more and grow to be more loving, Even if you are the smartest and most interesting person in the room, then make a commitment to serve the people around you and step out of your shell.

Through service to humanity, the best in us comes out, and we start to step out of the delusion of grandeur we may have and out of the illusion of separation. Through service we connect with people. Humble service teaches us about our true nature. It helps us understand the universal plight of humanity and allows us to be an agent of change in service to all of life.

It's important to remember that growth goes both ways. Learning to forgive the perpetrators is also a challenge. Now, change it in your lifetime and stand on your own merits. When can we stop hating? When do we stop needing conflict to define us. As adults, we can reexamine all of this and let go into something bigger.

When we dedicate our lives to service and the why becomes greater than the my, then we start to liberate from the delusion of separation. Stepping into a higher purpose means doing things for the greater good and helping people in need. It means connecting with people and selflessly serving their needs. When you step into this, it is a fast track out of isolation. There's too much work and too much to do."-

# Kidney Transplantation During the COVID Pandemic: A Unique Challenge

• Jose Benito A. Abraham, MD, FPCS, FPSTS, FPUA •

End-stage kidney disease is a serious illness that is incompatible with life. Whilst patients with this condition may undergo dialysis to prolong their lives, it is well-documented that the best option for long-term survival and better quality of life is still kidney transplantation. This is because dialysis cannot rectify the other problems of chronic kidney disease which include among others, progressive cardiovascular disease, impaired calcium and phosphate metabolism, hormonal imbalance, sexual dysfunction and impaired reproductive ability. On top of that, the financial burden brought about by chronic dialysis, leads to a poor vocational rehabilitation, depression, low self-esteem, and hopelessness, all of which impact negatively on both the patient and his entire family. On the other hand, transplantation reestablishes health and daily life patterns, increasing productivity, which restore the patient's self-esteem and mental health, with a chance to rebuild the family, thus ultimately leading to longer patient survival and better quality of life

For suitable candidates, kidney transplantation provides the best remedy for patients with end-stage renal failure. Their accessibility to this procedure is however, restricted by the lack of organ donors and further aggravated more recently, by the prohibitive medical situation resulting from the acute n-COVID-19 pandemic crisis. The resumption of transplantation in this setting also presents two unique clinical questions: "How safe is it for patients to undergo transplantation followed by immunosuppression?" "Will the pandemic crisis be a setting for an increased risk for severe COVID infection in the transplanted patient?"

The risk factors for severity and mortality from nCOVID-19 include the following; increased age, obesity, diabetes and hypertension. Other factors include; chronic kidney disease (CKD), heart disease, COPD, and asthma, and immunocompromised states such as those seen in patients who had had a solid organ transplant or those harbouring a malignancy. Kidney transplant (KT) recipients are

therefore vulnerable because of life-long intake of immunosuppression, and co-morbidities common among CKD patients.

After careful thought, the Philippine Society for Transplant Surgeons, together with the Philippine Society of Nephrology concluded that we cannot suspend transplant practices indefinitely during the ongoing crisis. However, in order for a safe and effective resumption of transplant clinical practices to remain feasible, we need to balance our patients' requirements for transplantation against the ongoing health crisis. This is because as we delay surgery, this can lead to the risk of worsening disease that impacts negatively on the over-all prognosis and survival. More specifically, this means that while we delay transplantation, the risk of our patients who carry a poor prognosis from the chronic dialysis becomes a more serious health concern. In June 2020, these societies came up with the first **Interim Unified Guidelines on the Resumption of Transplant Practices** during the pandemic. This emphasised a six-point agenda which included Institutional Preparedness, Criteria for selection of transplant candidates, Pre-KT and Donor workup, a revised informed consent forms, recommendations on immunosuppressive protocols and management of COVID infection among KT recipients.

We anchored our guidelines on the two-fold principles laid down by the Philippine College of Surgeons. The first is COVID awareness: which includes knowledge of local and national data as well as government and hospital guidelines on clinical practices. A sustained reduction in the number of reported cases in the concerned locality of at least 14 days is recommended. The second principle is institutional preparedness which refers to the following requirements: (1) Testing capabilities with RT-PCR (2) Available hospital and manpower resources (3) PPE availability (4) Adequacy of local facility capacity.

> 24

In the early part of the resumption of KT, we recommended that candidates be limited to those who require preemptive transplant, those with low cardiovascular and immunological risks, and those with living kidney donors. We recommended the postponement of high-risk candidates because these are patients who may require a more intensive protocol. On top of that, the complexity of their course may require intensive care management which may compete with the resources of the hospital which are needed to accommodate COVID patients.

As we gained experience though, we amended the guidelines in March to include Deceased Organ Donation and Transplantation with the following provisions: the utilisation of GeneXpert for the timely evaluation of donors for COVID. Only negative donors should be considered. The Organ procurement team should be screened properly and the members should comply with the policies of the local hospital.

Getting surgery during the pandemic is not the same as before. Patients need to be informed of the risk of having nosocomial COVID infection and the challenges may arise from disruption of hospital operations as people respond to the demands of the pandemic. Resources may be depleted without warning. Because of the unpredictability of the future, the importance of living wills and advanced directives need to be mentioned too. Therefore, a unique consent form had to be included that mentions the risks of acquiring COVID during this pandemic crisis.

Telemedicine became an important tool which can be used in the different layers of evaluation such as the initial physician and patient encounter, communication with transplant coordinators, referrals to other specialties and even likely in the ethics evaluation. The caveat was to have this reliable technology available for ourselves and our patients, in order to keep the lines of communication open while protecting data at all times. This is also one of the best ways of limiting our patient's exposure to the hospital setting.

We also needed to educate our patients on how to protect themselves while at home. We had to reinforce that they keep vigilant, practice frequent hand-washing and wear mask, avoid congregations and maintaining physical distancing. The caveat was for them to have a lot of common sense.

In summary, in order to be successful in our resumption of transplant practices, we should have a sustained reduction in COVID cases, supported by sufficient hospital resources and staff, established administrative and engineering controls, constant and consistent personnel training and education of KT and donor candidates. The COVID pandemic still takes precedence when an imbalance is seen within the health care system. All efforts need to be re-channeled to the needs of the pandemic because ultimately, this will also affect the success of transplantation itself.



# WRONG SITE SURGERY: Why Do They Still Occur?

• Benjamin Herbosa, MD, FPCS, FPAPRAS •



With all the Joint Commissions' decisions made here and abroad on the matter, there are still a few isolated cases that end unresolved. It behooves the surgeons for wrong sided procedures be attended to & prevented. Surprisingly, recent statistics have shown that they occur more with those who are the most experienced. It is a rare but distressing event that can be totally avoided and yet it still happens probably caused by complacency.

It is not just the wrong limb or the wrong part but also with the wrong side with which a part of the tissue sent for dermatopathologic guidance was not clearly marked for margins. This being a crucial and simple step, the surgeon and his team, after having completely extracted the specimen from the location, fails to identify its actual orientation and placement. A mortal sin as it may be called, is the inability to label accordingly "the piece of tissue" that was excised and thus faulting not just the surgeon but his assistants and the support group as well. It is catastrophic if not cataclysmic if lateralities are not established especially when the margins of resection need to be determined and accurately to avoid locoregional cancer recurrences. As plastic surgeons dealing with the minutest attention to details, and with scarcity of structures for tissue coverages (e.g as in the eyes and ears, the penile shaft), it is mandatory that close quartered focus is made to eradicate the possible errors especially in areas where tissue and vital structures preservations are a must. Even micrographic sectionings are not spared from these errors inspite of careful microscopic delineations.

There has been a protocol implemented to avoid these wrong sided occurrences which includes the 3 basic steps. These are namely Preoperative Verifications, Operative site Marking and the Time-out. This is the 3 step universally accepted Protocol made for all surgeons regardless of specialty. This is to what we all adhere to be guided. Unfortunately, some event happens along the way and to everyone's

disbelief, something is missed out whether the site's drawing has been erased or the laterality has been altered because of the position change from supine to upright or from a decubitus to the other. Whatever the reasons cited, it just simply happens.

A checklist of compliance must be handed and a simple remedy can be made. I devised just by "tagging" the side for which becomes the superior or cranial side. By making it a habit to mark one side as the constant will steer clear from the "certainty of disorientation". Use sutures or staples and apply them prior to complete detachment of the tissue circumvents the possibility of mishandling the specimen. Or just before passing on the specimen to the assistant or nurse for safekeeping prior to its transport to the laboratory, pick one side and clamp and label with a Marking. If there is a need to do an "intraoperative time out" prior to wound closure or await the frozen section results, do so to ensure the correct bearings of the sent specimen. We employ "tagging" using staples as well to localize the area of concern for irradiation after a wide resection.

It is appalling, disconcerting and a great disservice to the patient if the surgeon of good repute and training unnecessarily causes an error that is preventable; an inconceivable result of a recurrence, more so if oncologic treatment is required after. This is essential especially in an area where there is not much room for error, as in most areas where encroachment of a vital organ is a pressing matter. We possibly could give excuses, that we are human and that mistakes are a fact of life. It is a callous response to the error, which remains unacceptable when further suffering of a patient comes about.

Surgeons have to take this major event to heart and very seriously. These are reportable adverse effects and need to be reported and answered for. If the misjudgment and mishap happens, the protocol that follows would be 3 prong as well. And that is to Own it, Learn from it and Not to Repeat it.

## • ASSOCIATION NEWS •

# PSS Annual Goes Virtual

• Jose Miguel T. Lumawig, MD, FPOA •  
PSS Treasurer

Last November 15-16, 2021, the Philippine Spine Society (PSS) culminated its yearend activities with the well-attended First Spine Summit entitled “Multi-Disciplinary Convergence in the Treatment of Spine Disorders”. This 2-day event was a purely virtual, participated in, not only orthopedic and neurosurgical spine surgeons but also by endocrinologists, rheumatologists, rehab medicine, infectious disease, radiologists, and other allied experts in the field of spine care. Lectures, interactive case discussions focusing on advances, controversies in management, both medical and surgical were the highlights of the summit. Topics covered included scoliosis, multiple myeloma, cervical spine injuries, Pott’s disease, herniated nucleus pulposus, axial spondyloarthritis, and osteoporosis.

**PHILIPPINE SPINE SOCIETY**  
1995

**PHILIPPINE SPINE SUMMIT:**  
**Multi-Disciplinary**  
**Convergence in the**  
**Treatment of**  
**Spine Disorders**

Scoliosis  
Multiple Myeloma  
Cervical Spine Injury  
Pott's Disease  
Herniated Nucleus Pulposus  
Axial Spondyloarthritis  
Osteoporosis

Click or scan to Register

**1ST ANNOUNCEMENT**

November 15-16, 2021  
Online Event

The Spine Summit was the brainchild of Dr. Rommel P. Estillore, the current chairman of the research committee of the Philippine Spine Society, in close coordination with Dr. Anne Kathleen Ganal-Antonio, PSS scientific committee chairman, and other board members of the PSS.

Other societies which contributed significantly to the success of the summit include the Osteoporosis Society of the Philippines Foundation, Inc, Philippine Academy of Rehabilitation Medicine and Philippine Rheumatology Association. There was a total of 254 attendees, and 70 lecturers and moderators who graced the event. 7 PRC-CPD units were made available for all participants.

Under the leadership of our president, Dr. Francisco P. Altarejos, 2021 was the year where the PSS website was created. The website was well-utilized to bring forth the Society’s identity on the internet. All the activities that have been covered for the last year are found on the website including the virtual booths of our sponsors, scientific program, and membership directory. Visit us at <https://www.philspinesoc.org>

# PHKS 2021 Virtual Postgraduate Course

• Edsel F. Arandia, MD •

Adapting to the new normal, the Philippine Hip and Knee Society is proud to have successfully held a postgraduate course focusing on the principles and techniques in knee reconstruction surgery using a virtual platform last September 25, 2021. Lectures were also available at the registrants' convenience via on-demand after the event proper until October 31, 2021.



The full and jampacked programme consisted of a stellar line up of speakers here and abroad.

The foreign speakers who graciously lent their expertise and knowledge were the following Pruk Chaiyakit (Thailand), Pang Hee Nee (Singapore), Ngai Nung Lo (Singapore), Christopher Mow (USA), Joan Leal Blanquet (Spain), Chih-Chien Hu (Taiwan), Philip Van Overschelde (Belgium) and Serge Perrot (France).

Local speakers and moderators included Drs. Edsel Arandia, Peter Bernardo, Marcelino Cadag, Jesse James Exaltacion, Ilustre Guloy, Raldy Herrera, Liberato Leagogo, Mike Muñoz, Nilo Paner, Jose Antonio San Juan, Jose Fernando Syquia, Andrew Tabberah, Antonio Tanchuling Jr., Herminio Valenzuela, Edward Wang and Jose Antonio Salud.

To add buzz to the event, a generous line up of prizes for the raffle was up for grabs. The raffle was

designed to encourage members to interact with the sponsors.



PHKS 2021 Virtual Postgraduate Raffle Prizes

The event would not have been possible without the effort and expertise of SmileBox, our virtual platform provider, the PHKS Secretariat and the PHKS Board.



PHKS Board of Directors 2021-2022 (L-R): Michael Muñoz, PRO; Edsel Arandia, Ex-Oficio; Marcelino Cadag, President; Herminio Valenzuela, Jr, Secretary. Not in picture – Nilo Paner, Secretary and Geraldo Herrera, Treasurer

Indeed, the PHKS Board 2021-2022 have endeavored to deliver a virtual postgraduate course that is both interesting and educational just as how a face to face event would bring.

# PATACSI resumes program for the underserved

• Christopher U. Ocampo, MD, FPCS •

While we are still well within the COVID-19 pandemic, travel restrictions are easing out. This allows our surgical mission from last year to be more extensive as we can have more surgeons travel to a province or locality in need of vascular access, whether it be intrajugular (IJ)/permanent catheter insertions or arterio-venous (AV) accesses. The Philippine Association of Thoracic, Cardiac and Vascular Surgeons, Inc. (PATACSI) continues its help and support for our underserved patients with its program “Pagtulong ng PATACSI sa Panahon ng Pandemya: Hemodialysis Access Surgical Mission 2022”. There were two missions done late last 2021 which included one in Manila East Medical Center, and the other in Taytay Doctors Multispecialty Hospital. This year, while PATACSI continues its strategy of having

our local surgeons do the missions themselves (Southern Philippines Medical Center in Davao City and Gat Andres Bonifacio Medical Center in Manila), it has also sent non-local surgeons to help our local surgeons conduct the surgical missions. Surgeons were sent to the Cagayan Valley Medical Center in Tuguegarao City last March 19, 2022, resulting to 16 AV Fistulas, 5 permanent catheter insertions and an IJ catheter insertion being done. A more recent mission was at Roxas Memorial Provincial Hospital in Roxas City last March 26, 2022, where 30 AV Fistulas, 5 permanent catheter insertions and an IJ catheter insertion were performed. The PATACSI plans for more surgical mission this year as there is a long patient case backlog which became accumulated due to the lockdowns of the previous years.



# AWSP Hosts Kanser sa Kababaihan: Kelan Ka Kakabahan?: A Lay Forum on Common Cancer Symptoms Among Filipinas

• Joy Grace G. Jerusalem, MD, FPCS, FPSGS •

The Association of Women Surgeons of the Philippines conducted a lay forum on common cancer symptoms in women as part of the Philippine College of Surgeons – Commission on Cancer’s 3rd Philippine National Cancer Summit held last February 25 to 26, 2022 via online platform. The theme of the two-day cancer summit, Revolutionizing Cancer Care in the Time of COVID-19 Pandemic: Kilos Kontra

Kanser (K.K.K.) was made possible by the Philippine College of Surgeons Foundation and the Telemedicine Network of the Philippines.

The lay forum, entitled Kanser sa Kababaihan: Kelan Ka Kakabahan?, focused on the three most common cancer symptoms among Filipinas, namely, vaginal bleeding, breast mass and non healing wounds. The program’s format included a case presentation followed by a discussion about the clinical manifestations, common causes, screening and diagnosis, and treatment of gynecological, breast and skin cancers. The challenges in diagnosis and management brought about by the pandemic were also addressed. Three panelists, all members of the AWSP, were invited to serve as resource speakers for each clinical condition. Dr Florencia T Miel, an Obstetrician and Gynecologist and Trustee of the AWSP, talked about vaginal bleeding. Dr Maria Redencion Bukid-Abella, a Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon, discussed malignant skin conditions. Dr Hannah Angela D. Acosta, a Breast and General Surgeon and Trustee of the AWSP, spoke on malignant breast tumors. The event was moderated by Dr Joan S. Tagorda, Trustee of the AWSP, and hosted by Dr Joy Grace G Jerusalem, AWSP Board Secretary.

The lay forum was held in partnership with ADP pharmaceuticals, makers of Sofinox brand of Sodium Fusidate, Naflora feminine hygiene wash and Novuhair. Several prizes were raffled off after the panel discussion. The webinar was broadcast via Zoom, last February 25, 2022, and live-streamed on the AWSP’s Facebook page and YouTube Channel, with a total viewership of 398.

ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN SURGEONS OF THE PHILIPPINES, INC  
In collaboration with the PCS CANCER COMMISSION FOUNDATION  
during its 3<sup>rd</sup> PHILIPPINE NATIONAL CANCER SUMMIT 2022

## Lay Forum

### Kanser sa kababaihan KELAN KA KAKABAHAN?

**FEB 25, 2022, FRIDAY  
4:00 – 5:30 PM**

**HANNAH ANGELA D. ACOSTA, MD, FPCS**  
General Surgery  
PANELIST

**MARIA REDENCION B. ABELLA, MD, FPAPRAS**  
Plastic, Reconstructive & Aesthetic Surgery  
PANELIST

**FLORENCIA T. MIEL, MD, FPCS, FPOGS, FPSOG**  
Obstetrics-Gynecology  
PANELIST

**JOAN S. TAGORDA, MD, FPCS**  
General Surgery  
MODERATOR

Meeting ID:  
978 4207 8518  
Passcode:  
148722

Live streaming on:  
AWSP FB Page  
Scan the QR Code

Subscribe to  
AWSP YouTube  
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In partnership with  
Sodium Fusidate  
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Antibiotic

# B.T.S. (Bend, Tap and Spin) For Fitness

• Joy Grace G. Jerusalem, MD, FPCS, FPSGS •

In celebration of Women's Month, the Association of Women Surgeons of the Philippines, in collaboration with the Philippine College of Surgeons, conducted a webinar featuring different fitness routines of our surgeons entitled B.T.S. (Bend, Tap and Spin) for Fitness. The webinar was broadcast via Zoom and streamed on the AWSP's Facebook page and YouTube Channel, as well as at docquity, reaching as high as 70k+ viewers across platforms. The topic was in keeping with the trend towards new and exciting fitness programs to maintain health and wellness at a point where we are seemingly emerging from the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The AWSP invited two practicing surgeons who shared their personal fitness routines. Dr. Sigrid Agcaoili, a Urologist, discussed the basic principles of yoga and the frequently asked questions in practicing yoga before gamely demonstrating some basic poses. Dr. Joan G. Fabiosa-Reyes, a Breast and General Surgeon, shared how she manages keeping an active lifestyle by setting aside time for her many fitness routines. For the session, Dr. Fabiosa-Reyes shared how she got started with tap dancing and spinning, including what equipment is needed and where to get them. Both speakers actively answered many questions from the viewers during the open forum that was moderated by Dr. Maria Concepcion C. Vesagas, the

current Vice President of the Philippine College of Surgeons and a Trustee of the AWSP. Dr. Ida Marie Tabangay-Lim, Trustee of the AWSP, hosted the event. The webinar was held in partnership with ADP pharmaceuticals, who also provided raffle prizes for lucky viewers.

The poster features a purple header with the Association of Women Surgeons of the Philippines, Inc. logo and text: "Association of Women Surgeons of the Philippines, Inc. In collaboration with Philippine College of Surgeons In celebration of Women's Month present". The main title "B.T.S. BEND TAP SPIN 101 FITNESS!" is in large, bold, red letters. Below the title, three speakers are listed with their photos: Sigrid Agcaoili, MD (Urology), Joan G. Fabiosa-Reyes, MD (Breast Surgery-General Surgery), and Maria Concepcion C. Vesagas, MD (Moderator). The event date and time are "MARCH 17, 2022 THURSDAY, 5:00 PM ONLINE". At the bottom, there is a QR code, a URL "https://bit.ly/AWSPBTSforFitness", and logos for ADP, PMA, Zoom, and Facebook.

# Sagip Kalikasan Sagip Buhay

## “ENT Manggagamot kaisa para sa Inang Kalikasan”

The Philippine Society of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery (PSO-HNS) Environmental Advocacy Committee is an ad hoc committee formed to respond to the urgent need in promoting awareness in taking care of our environment. We have called this endeavor: “Sagip Kalikasan, Sagip Buhay. ENT na Manggagamot kaisa para sa Inang Kalikasan.” Our initial project was the terrestrial tree planting at the La Mesa Nature Reserve and Watershed. In partnership with the Philippine Academy of Rhinology and ABS CBN’s Bantay Kalikasan, approximately 500 seedlings were planted along the reservation area. The project continued for a year and covered 1 hectare of land.

The Southern Tagalog ENT Specialists Chapter also conducted terrestrial tree planting in the Malabanban Watershed, San Pablo City, Laguna. Our endeavor did not end here. The different provincial chapters of the PSO-HNS likewise had their own nature rehabilitation, this time involving mangrove planting. Mangrove forests are one of the most endangered habitats in the world and considered as home to a multitude of different animals including endemic and endangered species. The kickoff was held in Carmen Cebu last November 2021, hosted by the PSO-HNS Central-Eastern Visayas Chapter. This mangrove planting activity was later followed by the PSO-HNS Western Visayas Chapter, then the Southern Mindanao Chapter held in Bucana, Davao City.

Approximately two thousand seedlings, appropriately called propagules, were planted

### Sagip Kalikasan... Sagip Buhay



*ENT na manggagamot, kaisa para sa Inang Kalikasan*

in each of the said activities. One of our objectives in this endeavor was to help support the coastal communities by reverting abandoned and underutilized fishponds back to a healthy mangrove forest. This hopefully will provide the locality with increased coastal protection, food resource, and livelihood income.

Our task does not end here. PSO-HNS invites the whole PCS Community, and every citizen for that matter, in duplicating if not surpassing this activity in the hope of saving our planet. We believe that as health practitioners we should not be restrained in healing the illness of man, but also the ailments of our dwelling place— Mother Earth.



# PUA Mid-year Convention goes to Tagaytay City

The Philippine Urological Association will be having its Midyear Convention at Splendido Hotel and Twin Lakes Hotel, Tagaytay city on June 17-19, 2022. The 2022 PUA midyear convention will focus on Functional and Female Urology.

The event will feature Dr. Audrey Wang, a Functional and Female Urologist from Westmead Private Hospital, Australia. Dr Wang will talk about the pragmatic approach and management of female stress urinary incontinence. The sessions will also be graced by our local experts namely Dr. Frances Monette Bragais, Dr. Buenaventura Reyes and Dr. Mark Joseph Abalajon. They will talk about the updates in the management of vesico-vaginal fistula repair, the topic of nocturia, and the career paths

after Urology training, respectively. The Session will be moderated by Dr. Vanessa Geron.

A non-urology Faculty is also present to talk about blockchain technology and how to maximize passive income, hackproofing, and ways to improve skills in communication for speakership, and lastly, medical entrepreneurship. The non-urology sessions will be moderated by Dr. Karl Marvin Tan.

For more info, please visit [www.puaweb.org](http://www.puaweb.org)

**PUA MIDYEAR 2022 CONVENTION**  
PHILIPPINE UROLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

**PHILIPPINE UROLOGICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.**  
1957

## FUNCTIONAL AND FEMALE UROLOGY

**17 to 19 JUNE 2022**  
**TAGAYTAY CITY**

**DAY 1 - SPLENDIDO HOTEL**  
**DAY 2 & 3 - TWIN LAKES HOTEL**

**UROLOGY FACULTY**

- AUDREY WANG, MD**  
Urologist  
Westmead Private Hospital  
AUSTRALIA
- FRANCES MONETTE P. BRAGAIS, MD**  
Consultant Urologist  
National Kidney and Transplant Institute  
PHILIPPINES
- BUENAVENTURA JOSE B. REYES, MD**  
Consultant Urologist  
St. Luke's Medical Center  
PHILIPPINES
- MARK JOSEPH J. ABALAJON, MD**  
Member, Board of Directors  
Society of Genitourinary  
Reconstructive Surgeons  
PHILIPPINES

**NON-UROLOGY FACULTY**

- JOSEPH ADRIEL AQUINO**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Rebirth Meta Guild  
PHILIPPINES
- ROMANO VERDAD**  
Senior IT Security Analyst  
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- IAN BAKISTONA**  
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# Mangyan and nature: Highlights of 2022 PCS & PSGS - Southern Tagalog Chapter Induction and Turn- Over Ceremonies in Baco, Oriental Mindoro

Inspired by their selfless service and renewed appreciation for nature, the Philippine College of Surgeons held this year's Officers and Board of Directors Induction – Turnover Ceremonies and Awarding of the Master of the Knife at Infinity Farm Resort, Mangangan, Baco, Oriental Mindoro, February 25-26, 2022.

Known as the premier food basket of the MIMAROPA region, the 2022 PCS – Southern Tagalog Chapter chose the municipality of Baco, Oriental Mindoro due to its lush green nature situated at the foot of Mt. Halcon where the Indigenous People of Mindoro called Mangyans also thrive. The doctor-participants of this activity came all the way from the various areas of Luzon from Batangas, Cavite, Laguna, Quezon, and Mindoro. The 2-day event enabled the participants to join both in the Induction



- Turnover Ceremonies as well as in the other activities prepared such as tree planting, river clean up drive, and medical mission and gift-giving for Mangyans in Baco, Oriental Mindoro.

Being one with nature, on February 25, the surgeons spearheaded the tree planting activity in Mangangan, Baco wherein a total of 50 Apitong seedlings were planted. A River Clean-Up Drive was also undertaken along the rivers of Baco. The participants worked hand in hand collecting the litters and other thrash flowing through the riverbanks.

A gift-giving for 50 Mangyan families residing in the area culminated the activity for the day. Beaming with gratitude, each family received rice, grocery items and hygiene kits courtesy of the PCS – Southern Tagalog Chapter.

The next day, February 26, became another busy day for the participants. Mervin I. Tan, MD, FPCS, this year's PCS – Southern Tagalog Chapter Incoming President, formally started the Induction Ceremonies by celebrating a Thanksgiving Mass followed by the Induction and Turn-over Ceremonies proper. In his

Inaugural Address, Dr. Tan initially thanked his fellow surgeons, PCS Officers and Board of Directors for their support in the success of the Induction and Turn-over Ceremonies. Moreover, Dr. Tan, emphasized in his speech the importance of maintaining the high standards set forth by the College in line with professionalism, community involvement, and interest of his colleagues.

Furthermore, the following roster of surgeons completed the 2022 PCS – STC Officers and Board of Directors namely: Dr. Sylvia S. Abanto – BOD Batangas, Dr. Arvin Briones – PCS STC Past President for 2021, Dr. Manuel Ng – PCS-STC Treasurer, Dr. Randy Melo – BOD Laguna, Dr. Michael Lawenko – PCS STC Vice President, Dr. Rolly Reyes – PCS Past President, Dr. Ramon Inso – PCS National President for 2022, Dr. Dr. Maria Conception Vesagas – PCS National Vice President, Dr.



Annette Tolentino – PCS National Executive Secretary, Dr. Ethelmay Romero – PCS STC Executive Secretary, Dr. Froilan U. Dacumos – PCS-STC Governor 2022, Dr. Mandy Caraos – Taal Lemery Batangas, Dr. Aldrin Cuasay – PCS- STC Past President, and Dr. Ronan Inso – BOD Laguna.

Considered also as the most awaited part of the program, the Master of the Knife 2022 Award was given to Dr. Emmanuel G. Diaz, FPCS. Dr. Diaz received the much-coveted framed Balisong where his name is inscribed. Plaques of Appreciation and gifts were also distributed to the outgoing officers and speakers before the end of the program. //JPA



# CEV sees another busy year ahead

Visayas Region has endured an additional tragedy towards the end of 2021, with Typhoon Odette / Rai(Signal 4) making its landfall on Dec 16, 2021. The aftermath of the calamity that befell the region left the Cebuanos and Visayans shaken with more uncertainty. For several weeks, there was no electricity, scarce supply of potable water and fuel; on top of the destroyed homes and properties and with very limited lines of communication. Family members and colleagues were difficult to contact.

Despite the dark days with hardly any communication, the fellows and members of the board of the PCS National were quick to act and check on the welfare and needs of the fellows of PCS-CEVC. The committee on Relief operations for Typhoon Odette unrelentingly extended help and assessment of the situation despite the challenges in communication. The PCS National has unselfishly released Php150,000.00 to PCS-CEVC as support to all the 170 affected fellows of Cebu Province which were equally distributed to all its members; and a separate financial aid was given for the fellows of the province of Bohol as well.

The ill-effects of the typhoon dragged on for several weeks. While the cities of CEVC were slowly on its way to recovery from the damages caused by the typhoon, Cebu City and the Province was again hit by another adversity caused by the resurgence of the COVID 19 wave in mid-January, halting the economic movement which further aggravated the situation. Cebu was formally placed by IATF on alert level 3 on Jan 28, which was downgraded to level 2 on Feb 15 then finally lifted to level 1 on March 15, 2022.

Despite the challenges and adversities, the chapter has remained resilient and steadfast with its duties to the college. Virtual Meetings were continued in late January where a few were already able to have limited internet connection. February 2022 came, with lower cases of COVID 19, allowing for limited meetings. A hybrid induction ceremony for the 2022 Officers and BODs of The Cebu-Eastern Visayas Chapter was safely and successfully held in Radisson Blu Hotel on February 9, 2022. The induction was virtually graced and honored by the PCS National President Dr. Ramon Inso who inducted the 2022 officers and 10 new fellows of the chapter.



(L-R): Dr. Davy Guinto, Dr. Ted Marcery Gallo, Dr. Loreto Ong, Dr. Harem Deiparine, Dr. Ron Del Mar, Dr. Gilbert Oporto, Dr. Josef S. Lim, Dr. Tess Annette Serrato-Libron, Dr. McArthur Conrado Salonga, Jr.

## • CHAPTER NEWS •

# Cordillera Chapter: Off to a Good Start

• Anthony Vanadero, MD, FPCS •

## PCS CAR General Assembly and Induction of Officers (Hybrid) Fortune Restaurant, Baguio City, March 5, 2022

PCS CAR holding its Annual General Assembly and Induction of Officers for the year 2022 – Hybrid type for its Fellows. Special guests include PCS President – Dr. Ramon S. Inso, PCS Vice President – Dr. Maria Concepcion C. Vesagas and PCS Treasurer – Dr. Jose Vivencio Villaflores III.



# PCS CAR – Continuing Surgical Education: Joint Journal Conference (Online) “Recent Trends and Updates in Biliary Surgery” March 14, 2022

PCS CAR in cooperation with Saint Louis University Hospital of the Sacred Heart Department of Surgery held a Joint Journal Conference among the different training institutions. Journal presentations and appraisal were participated by training surgical residents from SLU – Hospital of the Sacred Heart, Cordillera Consortium, Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center. The conference was held via an online platform moderated by PCS Fellow Dr. Jeffrey Fontanilla. Discussions included the following topics:

- Human Fibrin Sealant Reduces Post-Operative Bile Leakage of Primary Closure After Laparoscopic Common Bile Duct Exploration in Patients with Choledocholithiasis
- Primary Two-layered Closure of the Common Bile Duct Reduces Post-Operative Bile Leakage After Laparoscopic Common Bile Duct Exploration
- Sphincterotomy Alone Versus Sphincterotomy and Biliary Stent Placement in the Treatment of Bile Leaks: 10-year Experience at a Quaternary Hospital

**DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY**  
SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL OF THE SACRED HEART

## JOINT JOURNAL CONFERENCE

**"RECENT TRENDS AND UPDATES IN BILIARY SURGERY"**

MARCH 14, 2022, 5:00 - 7:00 PM (GMT +8)

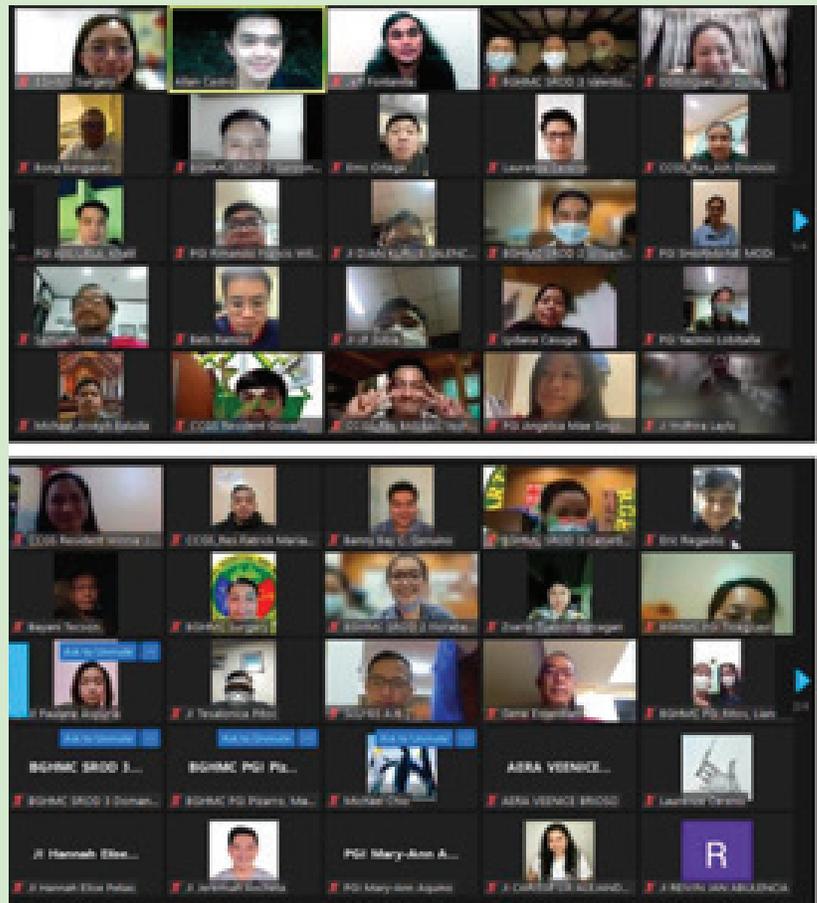
**DR. ALLAN CASTRO**  
SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL OF THE SACRED HEART  
Human fibrin sealant reduces post-operative bile leakage of primary closure after laparoscopic common bile duct exploration in patients with choledocholithiasis

**DR. JAYVEE DYNE DOMINGUEZ**  
CORDILLERA CONSORTIUM GENERAL SURGERY  
Primary two-layered closure of the common bile duct reduces postoperative bile leakage after laparoscopic common bile duct exploration

**DR. BENNIE JAYNE PEDRO**  
BAGUIO GENERAL HOSPITAL AND MEDICAL CENTER  
Sphincterotomy alone versus sphincterotomy and biliary stent placement in the treatment of bile leaks: 10 year experience at a quaternary hospital

**DR. JEFF FONTANILLA**  
MODERATOR

Meeting ID: 291 068 2464  
Password: SLUHSB

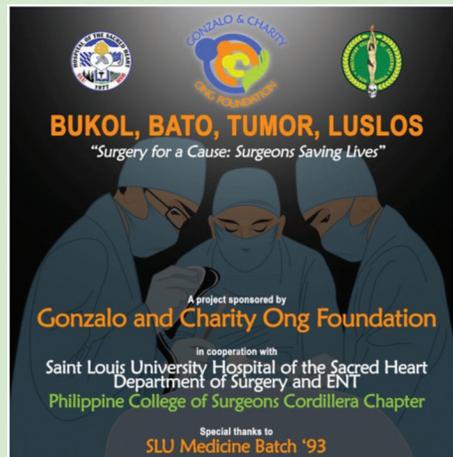


# BUKOL, BATO, TUMOR, LUSLOS

## “Surgery for a Cause: Surgeons Saving Lives”

Saint Louis University Hospital of the Sacred Heart, March 31 to April 7, 2022

A Surgical Assistance Project Sponsored by the GONZALO AND CHARITY ONG FOUNDATION  
IN COOPERATION WITH PCS CAR AND SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL OF THE  
SACRED HEART, DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY AND ENT



## SURGICAL SKILLS WORKSHOP: Suturing, Bowel Anastomosis and Basic Laparoscopy Lectures and Workshop, BGHMC Cancer Center Function Hall, April 9 & 10, 2022

PCS CAR and PSGS Northern Luzon Chapter in cooperation with Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center Department of Surgery




09 & 10 April 2022  
BGHMC Cancer Center  
Function Hall

### PROGRAM

APRIL 9, 2022  
Dr. Jola Salise- Master of Ceremony

**8am** Registration  
**9am** Opening Prayer  
Singing of National Anthem  
John Christian Santiago MD

**9:30am** Opening Remarks  
Dr. Anthony Vanadeto

**10am** Message from sponsor  
Mr. Eric Kison

**10:30am** Suturing and Surgical Knot tying Lecture and workshop  
Dr. Armen Posadas

**1pm** Bowel Anastomosis Lecture and Workshop  
Stapling devices for anastomosis  
Dr. Lydiana Casuga

**4pm** AWARDING OF CERTIFICATES



### PROGRAM

APRIL 10, 2022 (9am – 12nn)  
Jola Salise- Master of Ceremony

**9am** Minimal Invasive Surgery Lecture and Workshop  
Advanced Bipolar vessel sealing and dissection  
Dr. Batsay Boy Gestuino  
Dr. Armen Posadas  
Dr. Michael Baludja  
Dr. Hamilton Landayan

**11am** Awarding of Certificates  
**11:30am** Closing Remarks  
Dr. Roberto Ozaana, Jr.

# WE THE NORTH

• Ralph Lazarus R. Rapacon, MD, FPCS •

About 185km north of Manila, lies the majestic town of Mangatarem, Pangasinan. This first class municipality in Region 1 boasts a lot of tourist attractions like the Manleluag Hot Spring National Park, Timangguyob Falls, and the recently constructed Daang Kalikasan (a 60km highway connecting the provinces of Pangasinan and Zambales).

But more than that, Mangatarem has been the venue for quite a number of activities of the Philippine College of Surgeons. Last, December 13, 2021, the Philippine College of Surgeons Foundation, Inc. Surgery for the Underserved Regions and for Education (PCSF-SURE) Commission and World Surgical Foundation conducted a 4-day surgical outreach at the MPB Blessed Trinity General Hospital to address the unmet surgical procedures that has corralled during the pandemic. Notable figures who participated in this activity were PCS President Dr. Ramon Inso, Sr., Dr. Marcus Lester Suntay from the World Surgical Foundation, Dr.

Vivencio Jose Villaflor, III PCS Treasurer and Head of the SURE Commission. Adding to the list of activities was the Primary Care Committee of the PCS and the Philippine Academy of Family Physicians conducting a panel discussion on breast and head neck cases and a lecture on Stop the Bleed Program for our local officials.

Last March 9, 2022, The PCS-Northern Luzon Chapter in collaboration with the Pangasinan Medical Society conducted a tree planting activity at the Daang Kalikasan. Many areas that have been affected by the highway construction need to be rehabilitated. Also, it was a great time to appreciate the green mountains turn into gold hue as we watch the sun set in the horizon.

In observance of the Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, A Lay Fora was conducted at the Mangatarem Distric Hospital last March 23, 2022. This was in collaboration with the Pangasinan Medical Society, Philippine Association of Family



> 40



Physicians, and the Dagupan Doctors Villaflor Hospital (DDVMH) who spearheaded the said activity. A free diagnostic Fecal Immunochemical Testing kit was also distributed to the participants courtesy of DDVMH.

Truly this beautiful town in Pangasinan will make you appreciate God's Handiwork and Provision. No wonder people keep coming back to this place. A place where you can work, revere, help, and make new friends. Mangataram is a great place to be.



# PCSF S.U.R.E. Commision

• Vivencio Jose P. Villaflor III, MD, FPCS •

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented disruptions in both lives and livelihood and represents an enduring societal transformation with flexible approaches to achieve solutions. However, it must be emphasized that these disruptions will have a long-term impact which would be most palpable in the way healthcare services are delivered to the general population.

Surgery is an essential part of all health systems. The American College of Surgeons estimates that one in four people would need to undergo an operation during their lifetime. This underscores the importance of surgery as a mainstay of cure for diseases such as cancers even as it underpins the treatment of virtually all non-communicable diseases. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, approximately 5 billion people lacked access to surgical care and 143 million more operations per year were required globally. There was already a major global inequity in access to safe and affordable surgery across low and middle-income countries, with an urgent need to expand capacity.

Temporary disruptions in routine and nonemergency surgical care access and delivery have been observed during periods of considerable community transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. The ensuing delay would inevitably lead to increased morbidity and mortality risk associated with treatable and preventable health conditions and might contribute to reported excess deaths directly or indirectly related to COVID-19. This issue of unmet surgeries as a sequela of the pandemic constitutes a major concern for healthcare providers and policy

makers. This context also provided the impetus for like-minded surgeons to pool their efforts in addressing this emerging and evolving matter of utmost urgency.

The Philippine College of Surgeons (PCS) is considered the “mother” organization of all cutting specialties which was established in 1936 to ensure the quality of surgical care in the country. In recent years, the PCS, through its Committee on Surgery in the Underserved Regions and for Education or S.U.R.E. Commission has been actively involved in surgical outreach activities in collaboration with various non-government organizations and local government units, particularly in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas where the necessary surgical care is beyond reach.

The S.U.R.E. Commission is a quasi-independent body within the PCS, and serves as its humanitarian arm in promoting and upholding “Quality Surgery for All”. It functions as a coordinating platform for the conduct of surgical outreach activities that enables education, training, research and collaboration with stakeholders and envisions a country where surgery is made available to all regions, and are accessible to all Filipinos, especially the poor and underserved.

After nearly 2 years of being sidelined by the pandemic, the PCS S.U.R.E. Commission in coordination with its longtime partners from the World Surgical Foundation (WSF) spearheaded its SURGICAL OUTREACH AND EDUCATION PROGRAM which had its kick-off ceremony on December 14,

2021 at the Blessed Trinity Hospital in the Municipality of Mangatarem in the Province of Pangasinan organized by the PCS and PALES North Luzon Chapter through the generosity of Dr. Jaime R. Maron and Dr. Mona Palisoc. More than 140 indigent patients became beneficiaries of various minor and major surgical procedures which were provided free of charge by 62 volunteer doctors from various specialties. Other activities included lecture and panel discussion on Primary Care Surgery which included topics on the APPROACH TO EVALUATION OF BREAST AND NECK MASSES. Reactors and discussants included Dr. Alfred Q. Lasala, Dr. Alfred Phillip O. de Dios, Dr. Andrei Cesar S. Abella, and Dr. Maria Cheryl L. Cucucuo of the PCS Committee on Primary Care. Also joining them was Dr. Ricardo Guanzon who represented the Philippine Academy of Family Physicians (PAFP). The next day, the same group also conducted “STOP THE BLEED” a lay forum for healthcare workers from the Municipal Health Office, Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office, and Barangay Health Workers from the Municipality of Mangatarem. Activities shifted to the Dagupan Doctors Villaflor Memorial Hospital (DDVMH) which was venue for LAPAROSCOPY DAY which was served as the culminating activity in collaboration with the Philippine Association of Laparoscopic and Endoscopic Surgeons (P.A.L.E.S.) and other institutional partners. The event employed a hybrid format which made novel use of in-person attendance, remote surgery broadcast live, and virtual participation through online platforms and featured interesting cases utilizing minimally-invasive surgery for herniorrhaphy, cholecystectomy and thyroidectomy. Prominent luminaries who were present during the 4-day activity included Dr. Ramon Inso, recently elected PCS President; Dr. Vivencio Jose Villaflor III, incumbent PCS Treasurer and Head of the S.U.R.E. Commission; Dr. Miguel Mendoza,

President of P.A.L.E.S., and Dr. Lester Suntay, President of the World Surgical Foundation. They were also joined by Dr. Rouel Azores, Dr. Banny Genuino, Dr. Raymond Ong, Dr. Jeremy Tan, Dr. Eric De Leon, and Dr. Jeffrey Domino. The Laparoscopy Day was undertaken to demonstrate the viability of quality minimally-invasive surgery which could be made accessible and performed in a safe and secure environment amidst the backdrop of COVID-19.

The pandemic accelerated a lot of changes in healthcare that were already percolating in the background. In addition to propelling us into an age of discovery and innovation, this health crisis has magnified our shortcomings and has disproportionately affected the same demographic of the population who have been mistreated by the medical system for years. And while COVID-19 catalyzed many of the changes and inequities in health care, it really is up to providers to decide what course to take moving forward. The need to provide continuing care to patients, especially the underserved should be the main priority for all healthcare professionals. The concerted efforts of the PCSF, PAFP, PALES, ORNAP and PSA and other stakeholders is tangible proof of the primacy of teamwork and how collaboration and partnership between the private and public sector is a sure-fire formula for success.

But much work remains to be done. The backlog for unmet surgeries continues to grow by the moment, with demand outpacing supply. The enormity of the task is matched only by the desire of organizations such as the PCS to push forward with their steely resolve to bring quality surgery for all.

In accepting the challenge to continue pushing for this advocacy, PCS President Ramon Inso aptly and concisely put everything into perspective by uttering these words: “ITS GAMETIME.”

