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TOWARDS QUALITY HEALTHCARE FOR ALL

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Gawad Kalusugan

Top performing LGUs in health honored

By Gelyka Ruth R. Dumaraos



KALUSUGAN PANGKALAHATAN ADVOCATES Sec. Janette P. Loreto-Garin with the Gawad Kalusugan Awardees last February 20 at SMX Convention Center, Pasay City

The Department of Health (DOH) recognized the top performing local government units (LGUs) in health as Pillars of Kalusugan Pangkalahatan last February 20 at the SMX Convention Center, Pasay City.

Gawad Kalusugan is a harmonized awarding strategy that mainstreams all program-based efforts of the LGUs and looking at such in the light of the local health systems approach.

The major award given was the Excellence in Kalusugan Pangkalahatan Award which was

conferred to LGUs which exhibited commendable performance on health as reflected in the 2013 LGU Health Scorecard Report. The award aims to recognize LGUs (Provinces/Cities/Municipalities) for their valuable contribution in achieving Kalusugan Pangkalahatan.

Winners were selected from among the 80 Provinces, 35 Highly Urbanized Cities (HUCs), 5 Independent Component Cities (ICCs), 144 Component Cities (CCs) and 1,490 Municipalities.

A total of 10 Provinces, 5 Highly Urbanized Cities (HUCs)/

Independent Component Cities (ICCs), 5 Component Cities (CCs) and 20 Municipalities were awarded with the Excellence in Kalusugan Pangkalahatan.

Special Awards were also given namely, Red Orchid Hall of Fame Awards, Disease Free Zone, National Sandugo, Barangay with Best Sanitation Practices and Good Practice Award.

Red Orchid Award (ROA), which was established in 2009, that aims to give citations to local governments that have achieved a 100 percent tobacco-free environment. The Red

Orchid Award Hall of fame Award is given to LGUs that have won the Red Orchid for 3 consecutive years.

The ROA follows the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Article 8 that recommends adoption of measures to provide protection from exposure to smoke in indoor workplaces, public transport, indoor places, and other public places, as well as the Tobacco Regulation Act of 2003 that provide protection from exposure to tobacco smoke.

Its winners are judged based on WHO's "MPOWER" initiatives such

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Excellence in Kalusugan Pangkalahatan Award	
Province Category	Rank 1 Siquijor Rank 2 Southern Leyte Rank 3 Surigao del Norte Rank 4 La Union Rank 5 Sorsogon Consolation Prizes : Batanes, Biliran, Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, Mountain Province
Highly-Urbanized City / Independent Component City	Rank 1 Valenzuela City Rank 2 Lapu-Lapu City Rank 3 Pasay City Rank 4 Santiago City Rank 5 Mandaluyong City
Component City Category	Rank 1 Vigan, Ilocos Sur Rank 2 Koronadal, South Cotabato Rank 3 Candon City, Ilocos Sur Rank 4 San Fernando, La Union Rank 5 Masbate, Masbate
Municipality Category	Rank 1 Nueva Era, Ilocos Norte Rank 2 Adams, Ilocos Norte Rank 3 Lugait, Misamis Oriental Rank 4 Polanco, Zamboanga Del Norte Rank 5 Linamon, Lanao Del Norte Rank 6 Bagumbayan, Sultan Kudarat Rank 7 Jasaan, Misamis Oriental Rank 8 Piñan, Zamboanga del Norte Rank 9 Bansud, Oriental Mindoro Rank 10 Tagaloan, Misamis Oriental Consolation Prizes: Alegria, Surigao Norte; Almeria, Biliran; Antequera, Bohol; ; Banna, Ilocos Norte;; Bantay, Ilocos Sur; Carasi, Ilocos Norte;; Maripipi, Biliran; Sta Fe, Nueva Vizcaya; San Juan, Southern Leyte; Tubod Surigao del Norte
The Red Orchids Awards	
Province Category Misamis Occidental, Nueva Vizcaya	Hall of Fame Awardees Anilao, Iloilo; Bauang, La Union; Bindoy, Negros Oriental; Diadi, Nueva Vizcaya; Dipolog City; Dumalag Capiz; Dumingag, Zamboaga Del Sur; Esperanza, Sultan Kudarat; Iloilo City; Mabinay, Negros Oriental; Marikina City; Quezon, Nueva Vizcaya; San Juan, Southern Leyte; Santiago City; Tupi, South Cotabato; Villaverde, Nueva Vizcaya
Disease Free Zone Award	
Elimination of Rabies	Alabat, Quezon; Araceli, Palawan; Busuanga, Palawan; Cagayancillo, Palawan; Coron, Palawan; Culion, Palawan; Cuiyo, Palawan; Guimaras Province; Kalayaan, Palawan; Linapacan, Palawan; Magsaysay, Palawan; Boracay Islandy, Aklan; Perez, Quezon; Quezon, Quezon; Socorro, Surigao del Norte; Olympia Island, Cebu
Elimination of Filariasis	Cagayan de Oro, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Davao del Norte, Iloilo, Masbate, Misamis Occidental, Negros Oriental; Northern Leyte, Northern Samar, Occidental Mindoro, Palawan, South Cotabato, Surigao del Sur, Western Samar, Mindoro Oriental

Elimination of Malaria	Abra
2014 National Search for Barangay with Best Sanitation Practices (NSBBSP)	
Category I (Barangay with 250 households)	Barangay Payag, San Pablo, Zamboanga del Sur ; Barangay Poblacion, San Agustin, Surigao del Sur
Category II (Barangay with 250-500 households)	Barangay Raradangan, Alamada, North Cotabato
Category III (Barangay with more than 500 households)	Barangay Cabinuangan, New Bataan, Compostela Valley
Sandugo Awards for Gawad Kalusugan	
Small Barangay Category	Barangay Buenavista, Panabo City – 1 st Place Barangay Ma. Cristina Jaro, Iloilo City – Runner-up Barangay Agaman Norte, Baggao, Cagayan – Runner-up Barangay Calaocan, Rizal, Kalinga – Runner-up
Medium Barangay Category	Barangay Poblacion, Maco, Compostela Valley – 1 st Place Barangay Cuambogan, Tagum City – 2 nd Place Barangay Sta. Margarita, Baggao, Cagayan – 3 rd Place Barangay IV Poblacion, Himamaylan, Negros Occ. – 4 th Place
Large Barangay Category	New Visayas, Tagum City – 1 st Place Barangay Magdum, Tagum City – 2 nd Place Barangay San Francisco, Panabo City – 2 nd Place Barangay Aguisan, Himamaylan, Negros Occ. – 3 rd Place
Municipality/City Category	Municipality of Asuncion, Davao del Norte – 1 st Place Municipality of Maragusan, Compostela Valley - 2 nd Place Panabo City, Davao del Norte – 3 rd Place Municipality of Baggao, Cagayan – 4 th Place
Province Category	Negros Occidental Compostela Valley
Good Practice Award	
Davao del Sur, Laguna, Abra, Apayao, Benguet	

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as monitoring tobacco control policies, protecting people from tobacco smoke, offering help to quit tobacco use, warning against the dangers of tobacco, enforcing bans on tobacco advertising and raising taxes on tobacco.

Gawad Kalusugan also awarded LGUs for the Disease Free Zone Award for their elimination of rabies, filariasis, and malaria. This award is given to recognize the efforts of the health workers and the support of their local government units in achieving disease free status of their province/ areas.

It is also a way in demonstrating that control and elimination of diseases are possible and that these provinces/ areas serve as role models in other endemic areas.

The National Search for Barangay with Best Sanitation Practices (NSBBSP) is an annual event that gives recognition to the local government units at the barangay level that have demonstrated exemplary contributions in obtaining and sustaining our targets under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on Water and Sanitation that have demonstrated good practices on its programs and projects on environmental sanitation.

Moreover, the National Sandugo Awards is given to outstanding local governments who showed outstanding support, commitment and active involvement of leaders, coordinators, donor recruiters, and most of all the voluntary blood donors in the implementation of National Voluntary Blood Services Program (NVBSP) in their respective localities.

The Good Practice Award or GPA is a biennial award conferred to Official Development Assistance / Foreign Assisted Projects by the Project Implementation Officers (PIO) which is chaired by NEDA. Recipient of GPA is one that resolves a recurrent implementation issue or one that achieves a desired sector outcome. DOH holds the distinction of the only agency recipient of GPA in 2014.

"You can, and you do definitely make a difference in promoting the health of your constituents. You just do not support the Department of Health's program. You lead, you mobilize and you encourage your staff in carrying out and implement the program in your localities. Your efforts didn't go unnoticed," acting Health Secretary Janette Loreto-Garin said as she addressed the hundreds of health officers and LGUs who attended the event.

She also added, "You all deserve the recognition that is given you today. I hope that this will serve to further inspire you to continue, and even surpass, the good work you are doing now."

Dr. Garin also affirmed that DOH will continue to acknowledge and celebrate the good performance of the LGUs to serve as leverage in the realization of the Department of Health's attainment of Universal Health Care.

Regional Office V holds 1st Wellness Camp

"PEOPLE WHO cannot find time for recreation are obliged sooner or later to find time for illness," said American merchant and political figure John Wanamaker.

Fortunately, the Department of Health Regional Office V (DOH-ROV) knows the value of recreation in boosting professional performance as it held a Wellness Camp cum Christmas Party at the Macagang Business Center in Camarines Sur last December 2014.

More than 200 officials and employees coming from the regional and provincial offices fostered camaraderie in the two-day occasion packed with activities fostering team-building and leisure.

The affair jumpstarted early morning with a dance exercise led by the Hataw team. Consequently, the revelers were divided into four color-coded teams: blue, yellow, green and red. Teams competed with one another throughout the 12 games lined up for the 'Amazing Race' style daytime activity. The games aimed to develop trust and teamwork among the participants. Another objective is to reveal skills in communication, problem solving and decision-making.

One of the highlights of the daytime activity included the tolerance test 'I-shoot mo Baby' game where 60 year-old and above contestants threaded a needle in the shortest possible time.

In addition to the tolerance test, relay and ball games were also enjoyed by participants.

The daytime activity concluded with final and defining challenge, to create a team presentation for the evening socials. The presentation must show the Christmas theme infused with health relevance.

"We have this Wellness Camp in order to relax, rejoice and rejuvenate. So don't focus on winning; just make sure you have fun. That's what we are here for," said Assistant Regional Director Napoleon L. Arevalo, who led the red team.

After a few hours of rest, it was hard



MORNING AEROBICS To jumpstart the day's activities, morning exercises were done to prepare the teams for more physical activities for the rest of the day

not to put down the employees' competitive mood after a nourishing dinner and dreamy ambiance all set for the pajama themed party. The socials featured a raffle draw where 30 employees were lucky to take home extra cash. There were also prizes given to employees who were best dressed for the theme, best actor and actress, etc.

The program closed with the announcement of the blue team as the 1st placer. The green, red and yellow teams were awarded 2nd to 4th, respectively.

"I have seen us all work very hard to meet our targets through the past 11 months. This Wellness camp will help us release the stress we accumulated for the whole year so we will be prepared for another year full of challenges," said Director Gloria J. Balboa.

She added: "Since plans of having this wellness camp has been postponed many times, we have thought of finally holding it during the Christmas season. Simply having a Christmas party is not enough. I want everyone to have fun and at the same time encourage motivation and teamwork in the workplace."

The last day of the camp was dedicated to psychological and spiritual wellness. Processing of the previous day activities was held after breakfast. A mass was held before the revelers went home.

There are suggestions to hold the Wellness Camp annually because of its success this year.

EDITORIAL

Illustration by Donna Pahignalo



A salute to our LGUs

THE LOCAL Government Units (LGUs) play a major role in providing health services which include access to primary health care, maternal and child care, medicines, medical supplies and equipment. They also promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of their communities and their involvement in promoting good health practices.

The ability to bring national health programs to life, implement them locally and successfully

makes LGUs outstanding. It shall never go unnoticed and it is definitely worthy of recognition.

Last February 20, the Department of Health (DOH) recognized top performing LGUs in health as Pillars of Kalusugang Pangkalahatan through the Gawad Kalusugan, a harmonized awarding ceremony for the Excellence in Kalusugan Pangkalahatan as well as other special recognition for LGUs in a number of fields.

One of the special awards is the Red Orchid Award (ROA), which was established in 2009 to recognize LGUs which have achieved a 100 percent tobacco-free environment.

The ROA is in line with the World Health Organization (WHO)'s Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Article 8 recommending adoption of measures to provide protection from exposure to smoke in indoor workplaces, public transport, indoor places, and other public places, as well as the Tobacco Regulatory Act of 2003 that provide

protection from exposure to tobacco smoke.

Other notable awards include the Disease Free Zone Award for the effective elimination of rabies, filariasis, and malaria; the National Sandugo Award, which is given to local chief executives who showed outstanding support, commitment, and active involvement in the implementation of National Voluntary Blood Services Program in their respective localities; the Good Practice Award, and the Best Sanitation Practices awards, which honors LGUs that help in the sustenance of targets under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on Water and Sanitation.

The DOH acknowledges these LGUs for their outstanding performances — for leading, mobilizing, and encouraging their staff in carrying out and implementing the health programs in their localities.

While there's no specific set of steps guaranteed to work for every LGU, we believe that a key factor is that they believed that changes towards better health is possible with a wholehearted implementation of the national health programs.

We hope that the Gawad Kalusugan, ROA and other forms of recognition will further inspire them to continue the good things they have started to do in their respective LGUs and even try to improve on their current accomplishments, so we can achieve our vision of universal healthcare for all Filipinos.



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We would like to hear from you!

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DOH RO IX makes history

Successfully conducts 1st ever hospital congress

By Augusto Manolo G. Alpichi, MD, MPH

AS ANOTHER busy year for the DOH RO IX comes to its closing stages, the Regulation, Licensing & Enforcement Division (RLED) quietly prepared for what was going to be the 1st Hospital Congress, not just for the region, but for the whole country.

The event was held last December 1 to 3, 2014 with an impressive perfect attendance recorded for all hospitals and primary care facilities in the region. Just mindful of its sense of duty to hurdle the event in a successful way, the RLED staff unsuspectingly made history by conducting the first ever Hospital Congress where hospital stakeholders in the region were gathered.

The event did not just provide the stakeholders updates and trends in the sphere of hospital management and administration, but also recognized the outstanding contribution of exceptional health facilities and hospital personnel in the progressive evolution of hospital-based healthcare delivery system in this part of the country.

The three-day event started with an impressive welcome ceremony with home grown talents from various hospitals showcasing their artistic skills in dancing and singing. The keynote speaker, Dr. Rodelin Agbulos, City Health Officer of Zamboanga, provided a stimulating address extolling the congress participants to experience the warm hospitality of Zamboanga and to visit popular tourist spots in the city.

Our indefatigable DOH RO IX Director, Dr Nimfa B. Torrizo, in her inspirational speech provided an expert discussion on the congress theme: "Achieving Kalusugan Pangkalahatan through Hospital Regulation."

Expert speakers were fielded for the afternoon session of Day One of the event to provide congress participants discussions on new trends and updates including health care waste management and infection control. Dr Cynthia Rosuman, OIC-Director III of the Bureau of Health Facilities and Services (BHFS) discussed BHFS regulatory mandates and



functions. Dr Ada Silvera, Nurse V of BHFS- DOH Central Office, a known champion and expert in Infection Control, managed to highlight the importance of infection control as a critical component in the hospital healthcare system.

Dr Jacobo Mendoza, Medical Specialist IV from the Philhealth Regional Office, presented updates on Philhealth matters and interacted with the audience, answering questions and clarifying issues raised by the some hospital stakeholders.

The second day of the congress, dubbed as "facility familiarization tour", was an opportunity for participants to visit Ciudad Medical Zamboanga (CMZ), a showcase private hospital and Zamboanga City Medical Center (ZCMC), the only level III teaching-training hospital in the region. Before the hospital visit, the participants had the opportunity to listen to the good practices and innovative

strategies employed by the management in the operations of ZCMC and CMZ.

Dr. Joven Monsanto, President, Ciudad Medical Zamboanga, regaled the audience regarding the journey of the hospital towards winning the prestigious Philippine Quality Award.

Dr. Soraya Abubakar, emphatically delivered a well-received presentation detailing the century-rich history of ZCMC and its transformation as a premier government-run medical center. The hospital visit proved to be a very valuable learning experience to the participants as they were given the opportunity to gain insights on the operations of the two showcase facilities.

The insights learned will surely be applied by our dear hospital stakeholders when they go back to their hospitals and infirmaries in order to further improve their service delivery.

Sec. Garin welcomes back Ebola rapid response team

DOH contingent volunteers to train others

THE DOH contingent of the Rapid Response Team to West Africa returned last February 3, 2015 after two months in Africa including quarantine in an undisclosed location.

Along with contingents from the lead Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs (OUMWA), and the Philippine National Police (PNP) were six doctors from San Lazaro Hospital: Alberto Ponce Belarmino II, Rhona Marie Fulgar, Emerson A. Malala, Hamilcar Morta, Romulo Villamor Jr., and DOH team leader Anton Villanueva.

The six were recognized by Sec. Janette Garin during the DOH flag ceremony on Monday, February 9, which was followed by a press conference. "We are thankful for the safe return of all six," Sec Garin said.

The main purpose of the team was to assess the condition of Filipino OFW's in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea in light of the general health situation in each country.

Primarily because of the prevailing lack of non-Ebola healthcare facilities in West Africa and also previous difficulties in enforcing home quarantine as practiced in the West, support for the Philippine government's current policies on non-deployment of OFW's and continuation of the 21-day quarantine were upheld.

The Liberia composite, headed by DFA Vice-Consul Lorenzo Jungco with Drs. Villanueva and Malala, and PNP Lt. Col Samuel Pabonita, while and the Guinea composite, led by Mr. Jeff Cortazar of DOLE with Drs. Fulgar and Belarmino, witnessed the behavioural changes amongst the citizenry brought about by effective enforcement of anti-Ebola policies of the governments by almost all establishments and NGO's.

"Even Filipinos working in our hotel would not shake hands with us, only elbows," shared



RAPID RESPONSE TEAM The DOH contingent poses during a briefing at the command center in West Africa regarding safety precautions on Ebola. (R-L): Col. Joshua Alejandro, PNP; Jun Constantino, Finance Officer; Lt. Col. Samuel Pabonita, PNP; Dr. Anton Villanueva, DOH; Ex-Dir Ricardo Endaya, DFA; Vice-Consul Lorenzo Jungco IV, DFA; Hector Cruz, OUMWA; Jeff Cortazar, DOLE; Dr. Rhona Fulgar, DOH; Dr. Hamilcar Morta, DOH; Dr. Romulo Villamor, Jr., DOH; Dr. Emerson Malala, DOH; and Dr. Alberto Belarmino II, DOH. Photo by official photographer Wilfredo Macan, DFA

Dr. Malala, "and all entrances to buildings had chlorinated handwashing as a norm."

The Sierra Leone composite, however, expressed the need for stricter adherence to health and safety measures especially with regard to burial practices and personal hygiene protocols during gatherings. Dr. Villamor, in the composite with Dr. Morta, Mr. Hector Cruz of OUMWA, Mr. Wilfredo Macan of DFA, PNP Col.

Joshua Alejandro, and the head of mission Endaya- Usec Jesus Yabes, remarked, "In our hotel were doctors from the WHO and UN, and also MSF (Medecins Sans Frontieres)... but there is still a need in Sierra for more healthcare workers in order to contain the epidemic."

In light of this, Villanueva asserted that all six doctors are willing to return but that this is still up for discussion by DOH and DFA. "We were trained by DOH Dir. Lyndon Lee Suy and Dr. Arnel Rivera from Health Emergency Management Bureau, and Drs. Rontgene Solante, Ferdinand De Guzman, and Alex Dimapilis of San Lazaro Hospital, with proper

PPE donning and doffing at RITM."

"Yes, we would be willing to help train others based on our experiences in West Africa. At this point, epidemiologists and infectious/emergency management healthcare are critical."

Dr. Winston S. Go, Medical Center Chief II of the San Lazaro Hospital, congratulated the six medical staff of San Lazaro Hospital for being part of the Rapid Response Team - West Africa. He also expressed appreciation to the Department of Health for trusting the hospital and its medical staff. Furthermore, Dr. Go thanked God for bringing home the medical team safely.

As of press time, the Philippines has contributed PhP90-million to the UN Ebola campaign. This event was held at the DFA by Sec. Albert Del Rosario on February 4, 2015. While further discussions on Ebola (and MERS-CoV) continue, we must remain vigilant and proud that not a single case of Ebola has entered the country and that not a single Filipino OFW in West Africa has yet succumbed to the virus.

50,000 plus runners join PhilHealth's 2nd simultaneous nationwide run

By Emelita M. Retuta - PHIC



READY TSEKAP, GO! Thousands of runners from all over the country participated in PhilHealth 2nd Simultaneous Run dubbed as "Ready, TSeKaP, Go!" last February 16. (Inset) PhilHealth President Atty. Alexander Padilla lead the Manila run held at Quezon City Memorial Circle, Manila

MORE THAN 50,000 runners participated in the 2nd simultaneous run organized by the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation on February 15, 2015 all over the country.

Dubbed "PhilHealth: Ready, TSeKaP, Go," the event endeavors to drum beat PhilHealth's contribution to the Kalusugan Pangkalahatan agenda of the Aquino administration, and increase public awareness on the health care benefits and services that it provides to its members.

The run-for-a-cause event is one of the highlights of PhilHealth's 20th anniversary celebration with the theme "Ensuring Universal Coverage for all Filipinos." This took place simultaneously in 13 sites in the country that include Quezon City, Baguio, Dagupan, Tuguegarao, Olongapo, Lucena, Lipa, Naga, Iloilo, Cebu, Tacloban, Davao and Koronadal.

Focusing on the vulnerable sectors of society such as the elderly, children and the sick,

proceeds from this event will go to the Golden Reception and Action Center for the Elderly and Other Special Cases (GRACES) in Quezon City; the Amor Village, Home for Girls, and Gerona Office of Differently Abled Persons (GODAP) in Tarlac; Munting Tahanan ng Nazareth in Mabalacat, Pampanga; Faith, Hope and Love Kids Ranch in Sariaya, Quezon, Sinag Kalinga Foundation in Lucban, Quezon, Hermana Fausta Development Center in Quezon Province ; Naga Children's Home in Naga City; The Haven in Dagupan and Iloilo; Mga Kaibigan ng mga Kabataang may Kanser (KKK) in Iloilo; Gift of Life Project in Cebu; SOS Children's Village Kinship Program in Tacloban and SOS Children's Village in Davao City; the Home for Girls in Koronadal and Bahay ni Maria Foundation, Inc. in Cotabato City.

The Quezon City leg which was held at the Quezon City Memorial Circle had more than 9,000 runners. The event was led by PhilHealth Board members, Dr. Alexander A. Ayco, Dr. Eddie Dorotan, Ana Theresia N. Hontiveros-Baraquel

together with Chief Operating Officer/Executive Vice President Ramon F. Aristoza Jr., Area Vice President for NCR and South Luzon Dr. Shirley B. Domingo and Regional Vice President for NCR, Dennis S. Mas.

Winners in all categories were given cash prizes, finishers' medals (20k) and gift packs.

"Nagpapasalamat po kami sa lahat ng sumuporta at nakibahagi sa aming 2nd Simultaneous Run. Ako po ay labis na nagagalak dahil hindi namin inaasahan na bubuhos ng sobra-sobra ang suporta ng madla. Hindi po magiging matagumpay ang activity na ito kundi sa tulong ninyong lahat. Sa lahat ng aming mga sponsors, mga iba't-ibang ahensiya ng pamahalaan, mga pribadong kumpanya, iba't-ibang organisasyon, iba't-ibang indibiduwal na mananakbo at sa aming mga empleyado, tanggapin ninyo ang aking taos-pusong pasasalamat," said PhilHealth President and CEO, Alexander A. Padilla.

Albay women benefit from free goiter screening



ADDRESSING QUERIES Dr. Nathaniel Rempillo, Albay Provincial Health Officer (2nd from left) answers queries from the media guests. With him in the panel are: (L-R) Dr. Ramonito Tamos of PTA, Hon. Herbert Borja, Albay Board Member, Dir. Gloria Balboa, DOH-ROV

MORE THAN 300 participants from Albay benefited from goiter screening and other health services provided by the DOH Regional Office V, Albay Provincial Health Office and other stakeholders during the celebration of the 9th Goiter Awareness Month on January 27, 2015 at the Albay Astrodome in Legazpi City.

The celebration was held in a form of information campaign that adopted the concept of Lakbay Buhay Kalusugan (LBK), a DOH health promotion campaign that features a mobile bus that carries maternal and child health services and information to distant communities around the country. To add to the usual health services and health classes provided to participants who consist of pregnant and lactating women, their partners and children during LBK, were goiter screening, salt-testing and micronutrient supplementation.

"We want the Bicolanos, especially the women and children, to live a quality life free from the burden of goiter. It's about time to enhance their knowledge of this preventable disease," said DOH Bicol Director Gloria J. Balboa during the event. She related her message to this year's theme: "Goiter Sugpuin, Isip Patalinuhin, Iodized Salt Gamitin" and emphasized the responsibility

of women to protect themselves from iodine deficiency disorder (IDD) since women with goiter are at great risk of having miscarriages or giving birth to children with complications such as mental retardation.

Present in the activity were Health Promotion and Communication Service Director IV OIC Dr. Ivanhoe Escartin and his key staff, Philippine Thyroid Association President Dr. Ruben Ogbac, Mr. Ramonito T. Tamos - MERCK President and Managing Director, and Mr. Johnny Khong Hun - President of Salinas Food Inc. They did not only show their support to the campaign but shared their expertise during the press conference and lay forum held simultaneously on the same day.

The lay forum aimed to inform participants on the benefits of using adequate amount of iodized salt and educate them on iodine deficiency disorders and its effect on their babies. The forum also aimed to seek support from local government units to promote said program.

Goiter Awareness Week is celebrated every fourth week of January as declared by virtue of Presidential Proclamation No. 1188 signed December 2006. Since its proclamation, the members of Philippine Thyroid Council (PTC), a coalition of medical specialty

societies, government and non-government organizations, professional associations and allied groups take turns in hosting this event.

This year's celebration was organized by the Health Promotion and Communication Service (HPCS) of DOH Manila and DOH Regional Office V in coordination with the Provincial Government of Albay and with the support of Philippine Thyroid Association (PTA), National Nutrition Council (NNC), PhilHealth, JCI Daraga, MERCK and Salinas Food Inc.



SALT TESTING ON MOTHERS National Nutrition Council Regional Office V facilitates salt testing to pregnant participants of GAW Celebration at Albay Astrodome

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