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beat

SPECIAL
EDITION



Secretary Paulyn Jean Rosell-Ubial

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CONTENTS



26

- 5** A Day in the Life of the Health Secretary
Sec. Pauly Jean Rosell-Ubial
- 14** Another One Rises From the Ranks
Usec. Lilibeth David
- 15** He Almost Never Became a Doctor
Usec. Herminigildo Valle
- 17** Meet the First Registered Nurse
Undersecretary of Health
Usec. Roger Tong-An
- 20** The One Who Makes You Feel at Ease...
Usec. Gerardo Bayugo
- 23** The 16th of January
Usec. Achilles Gerard Bravo
- 28** Navigating the Politics of Health
Usec. Mario Villaverde

31 A Pioneer of Medical Physics
in the Philippines

A Sec. Agnette Peralta

35 In the Midst of the Crowd

A Sec. Abdullah Dumama Jr.

37 A Heart For the Marginalized

A Sec. Maria Francia Miciano-Laxamana

38 Unassuming and Admirable

A Sec. Ma. Carolina Taiño

41 A Man of Simplicity

A Sec. Nestor Santiago Jr.

44 Your Assistant and Partner in Health

A Sec. Elmer Punzalan

46 Your Companion in Nutrition

A Sec. Maria Bernadita Flores



05

50



EDITORIAL

Recognizing the leaders of health

Some of us might ask if it is really necessary to know the people behind the cabinet secretaries of the government. They might even wonder why there are other positions like undersecretary and assistant secretary aside from the secretary in a department.

While there are more than forty cabinet members in the Philippine government, one of the most mentioned in the media is the Department of Health (DOH) due to its numerous programs to address the different concerns on health, from infants to the elderly; from the very common, non-communicable, and treatable to the very acute and infectious diseases.

The role of the government is crucial in ensuring the delivery of quality, affordable, and accessible health services to its citizens. In more than 100 million population of the Philippines and how people are now becoming over-reliant on technological devices, convincing everyone to engage in healthy activities and to have a healthy lifestyle is a great challenge for the DOH, reaching the people from Metro Manila up to the geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas.

In this issue of the official publication of the DOH, we are introducing fourteen top leaders of the Department. From their prestigious achievements to the simple things that they do every day, the articles allow us a glimpse of the person behind the title. It also allows us to know them deeper and realize their capabilities and that they have different ways and roles in addressing the nation's health issues.

They are consistently committed and working together to promote and achieve "All for Health towards Health for All!"

-The Editors



She has the overall responsibility in the delivery of healthcare services across the country through legislated duties and executive authority. She provides the long-term vision to bridge current and future goals and challenges, thus putting health at the core of the Philippine government.

She is Dr. Paulyn Jean B. Rosell-Ubial, the Secretary of the Department of Health (DOH), and she is the nation's leader in public health, central to the efficient and effective operation of the current administration.

So what does a day in her life look like? There is no typical day for the Secretary, plans and schedules can change in a heartbeat as everyday yields new challenges.

She spends a day that is strenuous yet inspirational. She faces brief conferences with policy experts, media engagements, face-to-face interactions with diplomats, a stream of tedious formal duties, and, of course, phone calls and more phone calls.

A JUMPSTART IN THE MORNING

The Secretary wakes up pretty early at around 5 am, getting an average of seven hours' sleep, but lately as the DOH Executive Head, five to six hours of bedtime rest is already enough. She certainly has her own little rituals like everybody else.



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE HEALTH SECRETARY

Dr. Paulyn Jean Rosell-Ubial, MPH, CESO II
Secretary of Health

Before she takes her breakfast with her husband Edwin and son Karl, she jogs for 30 minutes to an hour if the schedule permits her, a real-life manifestation of her being a known advocate of healthy lifestyle activities such as “fun run.”



Secretary Ubial with her husband Edwin and son Karl.

She arrives at the office between 8 am to 8:30 am, and gets a rundown on the day’s schedule from her staff. She also keeps herself posted with a schedule in the calendar notes of her phone which is linked with the internet and updated by the executive assistants. I had a once-in-a-lifetime chance to be with the Secretary, and her executive staff, for a bustling day on November 15, 2016 where the itinerary happened within Metro Manila. My interview with her aimed to know her as a person and as a Secretary.

“Hello, today’s schedule is not so hectic,” Secretary Ubial greeted me, the first statement she made when she was introduced to me; however, a glance at the list of activities for the day showed otherwise.

Secretary Ubial started her official day at around 8:00 am to attend the Universal Health Care Forum V, with the theme, “People-centered Healthcare for All” in Diamond Hotel Manila. She delivered a speech recognizing the efforts of the stakeholders in the Philippines as well as abroad, united by a shared goal of universal healthcare. She cited two Filipino

proverbs “*Kapag tayong lahat ay nagtutulungan, makakamtan natin ang ating inaasam*” (Together as one, we can achieve our aspirations) and “*Tikatik man kung panay ang ulan, malalim mang ilog ay mapapaapaw*” (Light but continuous rain could cause even a deep river to overflow). Both adages speak about the desire of the entire health sector to come together and work towards a common vision and goal.

She also explained the Philippine Health Agenda and discussed the battle cry “All for Health towards Health for All.” The Health Chief added that in order to achieve the Philippine Health Agenda, the DOH will use the strategy A.C.H.I.E.V.E.: **A**dvance primary care and quality; **C**over all Filipinos against financial health risk; **H**arness power of strategic human resource; **I**nvest in eHealth and data for decision-making; **E**nforce standards, accountability, and transparency; **V**alue patients and respect clients; and **E**licit multi-sector, multi-stakeholder support for health.

The Secretary emphasized the important role of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation, or PhilHealth, as the lead agency in implementing the national health insurance program. She believes that the Universal Health Care Forum is a shining example of public-private partnership for health. As a final point, she urged everyone to be truly committed in working together to achieve the vision of universal health care.

At around 10am, the Secretary arrived at the Waterfront Manila Pavilion Hotel. She graced the Philippine Antibiotic Awareness Week (PAAW) 2016 celebration, a joint effort of the DOH, together with the Department of Agriculture and other member institutions of the Inter-Agency Committee on

Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR). This is to fight the silent epidemic of AMR through close collaboration with the World Health Organization and stakeholders from both private and public sectors. In her inspirational speech, she said that the challenge is to sustain concerted multidisciplinary approach to institutionalize the Antimicrobial Stewardship program across all health facilities in the country through strong commitment, leadership, and instill rational use of antibiotics by every Filipino through advocacies and awareness events.

At the press conference, aside from AMR, other issues were raised such as the prevalence of the Zika virus in the country, graphic health warnings in all tobacco products and the DOH relief assistance for stranded overseas Filipino workers in Saudi Arabia among others.

A-NO-NOON-BREAK JOB

Being a Secretary is tough and she needs to be tougher each day. One of the challenges is living a culture of “no noon break” most of the time because work continuously comes on the spot and sometimes meetings are scheduled and comes unexpectedly even during meal times. At around 12:30 pm, she had her lunch at the same hotel. The Secretary maximized her time by talking about programs and other significant matters with other guests at the table and of course, answering phone calls.

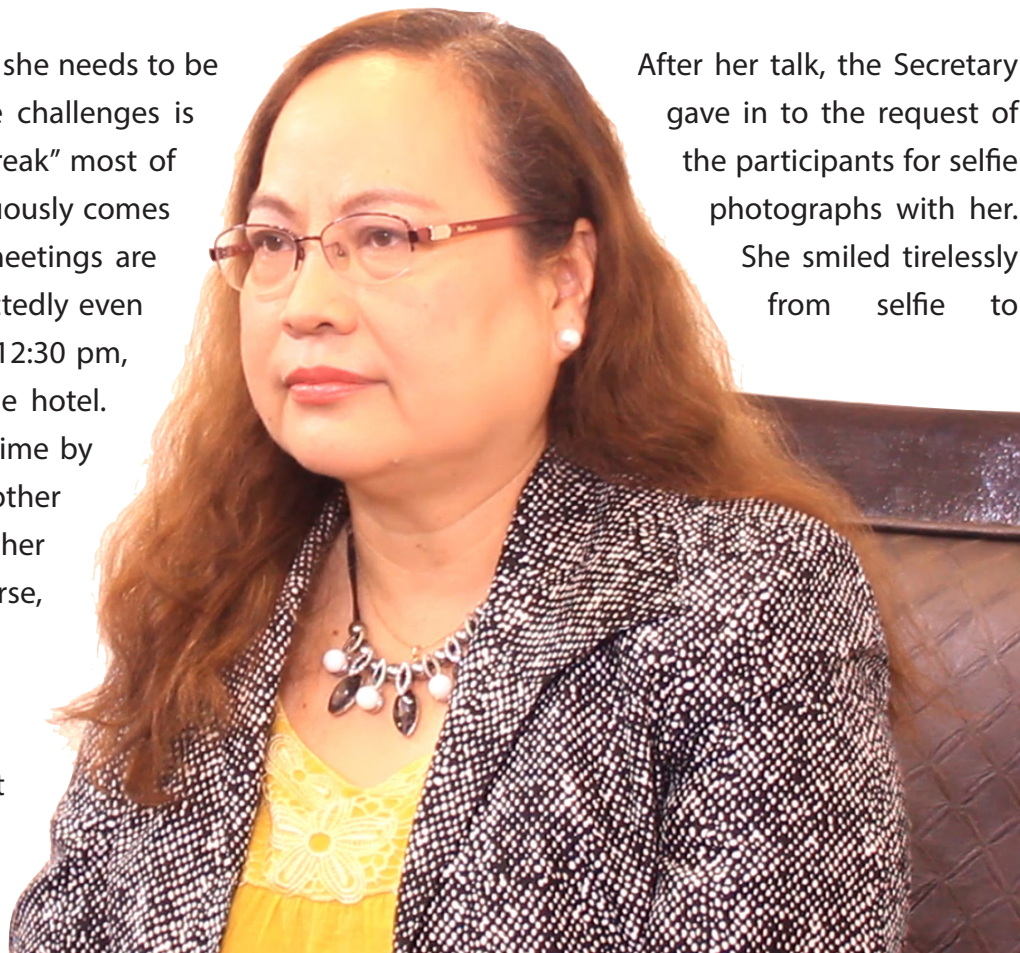
VIBRANT AFTERNOON

At exactly 1:30 pm, we arrived at The Bayview Park Hotel Manila where the Health Promotion and Communication Service

staff was set to take a video shoot for the DOH campaign against Zika virus. After the Secretary was made up, she rehearsed her lines and faced the camera. She was doing great and could easily catch up with the mood set by the director.

Right after the shoot, the Secretary gave a message to the participants of the 6th Catholic Asia-Pacific Coalition on HIV and AIDS Conference at the same venue. She respectfully stressed that even though there are things that the DOH and the Catholic Church could not agree on, there are more equally essential health programs that can actually be worked on together. She also expressed appreciation for their continued efforts and initiatives to halt the spread of HIV and AIDS by stirring the people, reaching out to them and developing activities that are good opportunities for the Catholic organization in the Asia and Pacific region.

After her talk, the Secretary gave in to the request of the participants for selfie photographs with her. She smiled tirelessly from selfie to



group photographs.

On that same day and venue, the World Diabetes Day 2016: A Stakeholders Forum took place. This year's theme is "Eyes on Diabetes", it is to create awareness about the disease and its devastating effects. Secretary Ubial was once part of the Diabetes Commission and since then, she has become an active advocate.

In her closing remarks, she stressed that diabetes is a growing epidemic and so everyone must eat right and be healthy. She also requested everyone to remember the diabetic community and prevent many people from acquiring the disease. Lastly, she accentuated that health workers must value their clients at all times because it can make them compliant to their medications and drive their spirit forward to a healthier life.



Secretary Ubial delivering the Welcome Remarks with her signature ACHIEVE hand gesture during the Walk for Life – Elderly Filipino Week.

At 4:40 pm, the Secretary together with all the participants went at the Rizal Park for the group photographs. She was still in high spirits. There was no trace of weariness on her at all.

Then it was time to go home at 5:30 pm. Inside the

van, when we were about to go home, she suddenly remembered about a scheduled meeting with different country representatives. So she immediately instructed the driver to return to The Bayview Park Hotel Manila. The meeting ended at around 7:30 pm. This time, it was definite that the Secretary was going home.

ALWAYS A FAMILY NIGHT

The Secretary said that she strongly believes in spending quality time with her family, which is fundamental in keeping family ties strong such as a simple dinner with family. Exchanging daily accounts with her husband and son builds stronger bonds and creates moment that can enrich the emotional health for each other.

Furthermore, she said that after watching television or reading books, she sleeps at around nine or ten in the evening. Enough rest for her to face with zeal and hope a brand new tomorrow.

DESCRIBE YOURSELF

How do you describe yourself? - the question seems simple enough but actually makes a person think. The Health Secretary ceased in a while to ponder on the appropriate adjectives for her.

"Describe yourself in three words"- is simpler and brought out her creative juice by answering through the acronyms of her nickname "**PAU**" wherein **P** stands for positive, she works and lives a life full of optimism; **A** for amiable, she believes that she is friendly, approachable and outgoing; and **U** for unrelenting because she does her work in a constant and determined way without weakening in vigor.

THE DREAM AND DESTINY

In a typical Filipino family, most parents suggest a

career they think is fitting to their children. The same was true with the parents of the Secretary. Ever since, her parents wanted Paulyn to pursue medicine. She was obedient enough, she knew that she was capable of being a doctor and so it happened.

However, her only dream and prayer was to help as many people as she could. That prayer was, in a way, granted when she started working in a public office and was fully realized when she became the DOH Secretary, she is currently at the pinnacle of her career in serving the entire nation.

"I did not dream to be at the top, I just prayed that I will be of help to many people as possible," Secretary Ubial said with humility and sincerity.

AS A VOLUNTEER RURAL HEALTH WORKER

What a great journey it has been for Dr. Ubial!

She has served public office for 28 years and has been under 13 health secretaries. She literally rose from the ranks, starting as volunteer health worker in Kidapawan, North Cotabato up to the position of Assistant Secretary. The latest before she was appointed as Secretary of Health was being the Deputy Head for the Office of Health Regulations. Her vast experience in the country's health conditions have led her to be a leader and champion of *Kalusugan Pangkalahatan* with advocacies in mental health, women and children's health, and tobacco control, among others.

As a rural health worker, touching the lives of the people gave her utmost joy. She believes that public service is priceless such as the smiles of the clients and their simple gestures of gratitude. She was a hardworking volunteer doctor that has motivated



Secretary Ubial donating blood during the National Blood Donor's Month held at the Central Philippine University in Jaro, Iloilo.

Kidapawenos in their quest for behavior change towards health.

At times, the Secretary feels overwhelmed when former patients come back to her, not for a follow-up checkup but to say “Thank you, Doc.”

“There is a place in the sun for everyone, and not all health professionals have to be in the city, in a private or clinical practice; some of us can find fulfillment in rural practice as I did when I was a volunteer doctor. I believe that there are still many people who will find fulfillment in rural area,” Secretary Ubial says to the rural health workers of today.

AS A MOTHER



Secretary Ubial with her son Karl at Malacañan Palace.

Despite her busy schedule, Secretary Ubial attends to the needs of her son. She makes it a point to spend quality time and bonding with him. She makes sure that she does not impose on him and gives him the

freedom to choose and the right to do his own thing. However, as a mother, she is always on hand to advise or give motherly opinions to enlighten him with decision-making. The bottom line is that she gives her hundred percent support to all the undertakings of Karl.

Being a mother helps her in becoming a good and effective manager. At home, she finds the right perspective on good interpersonal relationships such as the polite and kind treatment of co-workers and clients from all walks of life. The Secretary is open and understanding because she considers her staff as a family. She believes that a leader should be like a mother who always sees to the welfare of her family; in the same way that the DOH Secretary ensures that the health of the Filipinos is the top priority.

SCHEDULING CONFLICT

“Prioritization and delegation are keys to an organized day,” Secretary Ubial said when asked about dealing with plenty of activities and endless phone calls.

With overlapping events, the Secretary makes sure that the important things are dealt with first. She delegates other activities to her Undersecretaries and Assistant Secretaries to represent her. She knows that proper communication is necessary in giving out tasks while taking into consideration everyone’s workload and schedule.

ACHIEVE!

When Secretary Ubial was asked about what she wants to achieve each day in relation to the DOH’s battle cry, “All For Health towards Health For All,” she responded by differentiating achievement from accomplishment first. According to her, she learned that to accomplish is just doing what is supposed to be done while to achieve is when goals are being met,

reaching a certain position or status. Thus, she wants to achieve her daily goals through the promotion of the DOH programs and getting the stakeholders and partners involved towards achieving health for all Filipinos.

HANDSHAKES AND SELFIES

As much as she can accommodate, she gives time for selfies and handshakes with the people because it shows the value of the clients for her. She considers the people as the chief “partners” of the DOH, an affirmation that they are important.

WHAT MAKES HER ANGRY

Sometimes we cannot control our emotions especially when work is demanding and urgent. The Secretary gets angry, as far as work is concerned, when a simple instruction was said twice or more and still, it was not done or accomplished well. She also mentioned about people that are *makulit*, she can be irritated easily.

She believes that it is a normal feeling that can be triggered based on our reaction to a variety of things, people, circumstances, or personal problems, just to name a few. It can also be a reaction to a single event, or a response to a repeated phenomenon. “Remember, even though anger will most likely be a part of life, you don’t have to let it control you,” she wrapped up.

NORMAL WEEKENDS

In the absence of meetings and activities during weekends, Secretary Ubial goes home to Cainta to spend time with the family. It is a simple reunion with fun activities like playing board games, watching TV together and forming the jigsaw puzzle. She also spends her day productive by gardening. She brought up about her special skill in cross-stitching

and writing journals in her free time.

MOTTO IN LIFE

Personally, a motto that motivates the Secretary in her daily activities comes from a prominent missionary Stephen Grellet which goes “I shall pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.”

Truly, that is a motto that reflects how Secretary Ubial actualizes her mission as the executive official of the Department. She even cross-stitched this touching quote that can be seen displayed in the Cotabato City Health Office.

FAVORITE LEADER

Secretary Ubial is inspired by some great leaders. She cited Mahatma Ghandi as one of her favorite icons, because of his combination of good leadership styles and courage. She admires his advocacy of non-violence resolution of crisis and compassionate care. Blessed Mother Theresa is also a favorite of the Secretary. She has a high regard for her in taking care of the poor, the sick, the dying, and the marginalized people without expecting anything in return. Dr. Ubial believes that, like St. Mother Theresa, she is also a servant leader who cares deeply about people and strives to create an environment where all her staff in the DOH can do their best work towards achieving health for all.

PREDECESSORS WHO INSPIRE HER MOST

From Dr. Jose Fabella, the first ever Secretary and Public Welfare Commissioner of then Department of Health and Public Welfare, there is a total of 28 DOH Secretaries including Secretary Ubial. The Secretary has served in public office for 28 years and has been



Secretary Ubial putting the promotional sticker of the Expanded Newborn Screening on a public utility jeepney.

under 13 health secretaries. These Secretaries molded her with their own unique ways of management. However, among them, she was inspired most by four Secretaries she has served.

"Many inspired me but if I have to choose one, I cannot. There are four of them," the Secretary said.

She named first former Secretary Alfredo R.A. Bengzon, the first Health Secretary under the restored democracy in March 1986, who exuded determination and political will.

Next on her list is "Let's DOH it!" Secretary Juan Flavio, perhaps the most popular DOH executive official because of his friendly personality. "He had a very personal touch in the service, he remembered all the names of his staff and he was a compassionate leader," she said.

Former Secretary Francisco Duque III is also her inspiration. She considers him as a determined leader who ensured the effectivity of the programs, and she respects his opinions that help in the goals of the organization. "Aside from his good management,

he inspires me because he promoted me twice as a Director and as an Assistant Secretary," Secretary Ubial said with a smile. She believes that Dr. Duque saw in her the sincerity and that she is a true worker. "He is good to work with but not easy, in several encounters we had disagreements, we argued with some matters but in the end, we come into a compromise and moved the health agenda forward," Secretary Ubial added.

Lastly, the Secretary during President Joseph Estrada's administration, Secretary Alberto Romualdez, inspires her, too. She looks up to him as one of the leaders with vision and political will to attain that vision. He was the one who crafted the Health Reform Agenda, and even if it was difficult, they moved forward towards that vision.

LEADERSHIP STYLE

Secretary Ubial's approach in running her administration is the participatory style of leadership. "I do not have the monopoly of bright ideas. As much as possible, I get all the ideas on the table and have the consensus of which is the best idea, gathering everybody's opinions before I make a decision," she said.

MOST IMPORTANT EVENT IN HER LIFE

Secretary Ubial considers having a family of her own as the most important event that happened in her life. It is always a joy for her to be a good mother and a loving wife. Days may be toxic but she still pledged her life to fulfill the duties at home. She is a woman who knows that her love, emotional support and physical presence are vital to the well-being of her family. She cherishes the day she had them and in the process, they molded her as the person she is now.

CRITICISMS

“You cannot please everyone,” Secretary Ubial’s straightforward answer to the question about dealing with criticisms. She also said that criticisms are part of the job, especially when one is a public figure. There will always be somebody who will not agree with you. “I believe that there is always a room for improvement and that disapproval of any kind, maybe right or wrong, I value them to better myself,” she said.

FUNNIEST

She will never forget a funny anecdote in one of her visits and mission to Tacloban City, a few days after super typhoon Yolanda happened.

Secretary Ubial, who was then an Assistant Secretary, was at the airport and was looking for a toilet but was not able to find one due to the huge damage the super typhoon had caused. A staff heard of her need and told her, “*Wait lang Ma’am, kukuha lang po ako ng payong.*” (Wait for a while Ma’am, I’m going to look for an umbrella).

Secretary Ubial thought that her staff knew where the toilet was and that the umbrella will be used to protect them from the heat of the sun or unexpected rain in going to the toilet nearby. The staff immediately returned and positioned the umbrella on the floor.

“To my surprise, the staff instructed me to use the umbrella in covering myself while answering the call of nature, right there where we are. Since I could not contain it anymore, I had no choice but to do it there and I did,” the Secretary hilariously recalled.

MESSAGE TO THE FILIPINOS

“I have been saying even before, when I was in Davao as the Regional Director, that health is everyone’s

concern. As a Filipino patient or client, you do not only depend on the health system or the health workers, you should be responsible enough for your own health. For example, if you got sick due to smoking, take that as a responsibility. Do not blame the government for your illness. So refrain from smoking and live a good, happy, and healthy life. I call on to all Filipinos that you are in charge of your health, so to ensure that you stay healthy, you must eat right, exercise regularly, avoid the use of illegal drugs, and have your annual checkup, so diseases can be detected early and you can have a healthy and productive country working towards the attainment of “All for Health towards Health for All,” Secretary Ubial passionately expressed. **HB**



Francis Billeza of Healthbeat with the Health Secretary Paulyn Jean Rosell-Ubial, culminating the activities of the day with the ACHIEVE gesture.

ANOTHER ONE RISES FROM THE RANKS

Dr. Lilibeth C. David, MPH, MPM, CESO III

Undersecretary

Office for Policy and Health Systems

Undersecretary Lilibeth David has been working for more than 25 years in the health sector. She has been an Undersecretary of Health for almost two years and headed the Office for Policy and Health Systems cluster of the Department of Health (DOH). An office that provides technical leadership and advice on: health policy; quality assurance; research; legislative relations; external affairs, trade relations on health and supports the overall strategic direction on health financing, resource allocation, and procurement planning. She is integrally involved in the performance, monitoring and evaluation of the Philippine Department of Health programs and projects.

She has oversight functions to the following offices/bureaus to ensure that strategies aligned to the Philippine Health Agenda, values and committed performance target:

- a) Bureau of International Health Cooperation
- b) Health Policy Development and Planning Bureau
- c) Quality Management System Office
- d) Attached Agency: Philippine Health Insurance Corporation

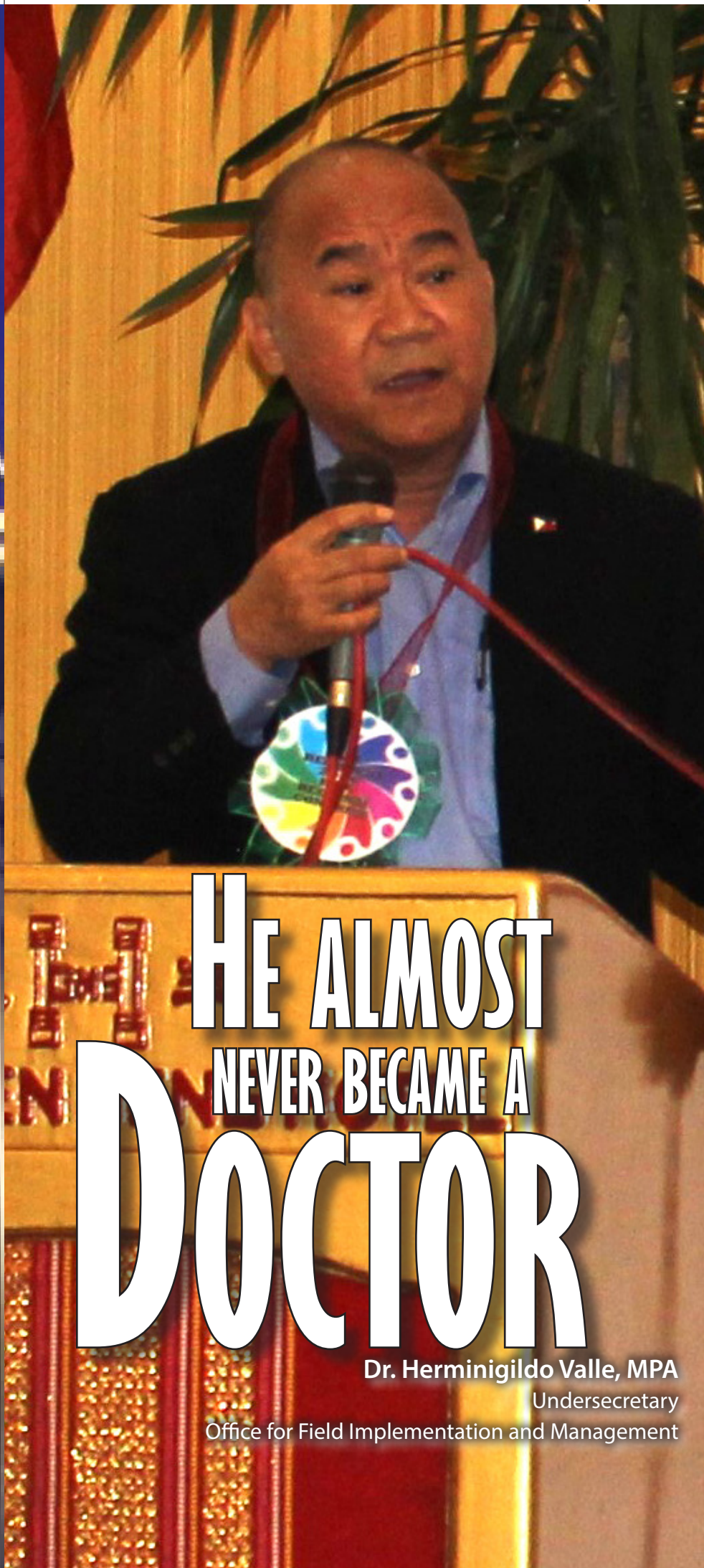
Undersecretary David is also the designated permanent representative of the DOH to the following inter-agency and high level meetings:

1. Permanent Cabinet Assistance Secretariat Representative
2. Board of Trustees - Specialty Hospitals
4. Social Development Committee and the Human Development and Poverty Reduction technical board

5. Government Procurement Policy Board
6. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
7. International Organization for Standardization and Integrated Management Committee
8. ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Health Development
9. PhilHealth Sector Reform Contract – signatory to documents
10. Board of Trustees - Development Academy of the Philippines
11. Project Director and Project Implementation Officer of all Foreign Assisted Projects of the Department of Health
12. Legislative Liaison Officer to Presidential LLO
13. Chairperson - Central Office Bids and Awards Committee B
14. Philippine Health Research Ethics Board

HB





HE ALMOST NEVER BECAME A DOCTOR

Dr. Herminigildo Valle, MPA

Undersecretary
Office for Field Implementation and Management

Hardworking, patient, optimistic and funny- these are the words that describe Undersecretary Herminigildo Valle. The moment he stepped inside his office, he immediately made everyone feel at ease with his friendly and approachable vibe.

Undersecretary Valle was born and raised in Davao City where he went to Holy Cross of Davao College for his elementary and secondary education, a Catholic school run by Canadian priests. Then he spent two and a half years in Ateneo de Davao for college before he transferred to Manila where he ended up finishing Medicine at the Far Eastern University.

After graduation from the medical school, he went back to Davao for his internship in the rural areas. He was assigned to the Paquibato district, an area considered a war zone during that time. There were no bridges and they had to cross rivers to get to the community. He said that it was an enriching experience because the people were very nice and hospitable. He decided to stay for a little longer before he joined his parents in the United States to continue his residency training as a doctor.

Undersecretary Valle did not originally plan to become a doctor. When asked about what profession he would be in right now if he was not a doctor, he answered "I would probably be a priest *pero lumabas rin ako*. Actually, my father is a CPA (Certified Public Accountant), *so ang plano niya sa*

aming magkakapatid ay maging CPA din. I served as an altar boy when I was in grade school and was recommended by my teacher to join the seminary because of my good record in school. I stayed there for two months after high school." He left the seminary after realizing that it was not his fate. He said that being a CPA didn't really click for him also so he decided to pursue his career as a doctor instead.

The Undersecretary also shared that his inspiration is his parents. "My father is the youngest of 12 children, they were from up north, *Ilokano sila. Mga farmers ang grandparents ko.* At a certain point in his life *lumuwas sila ng Maynila.* Then my father got married at the age of 18, my mother was 16. My father was a working student and at the same time *may family na sya. Nu'ng mag-graduate siya ng college, tatlo na ang anak nila.*" He admires his father for being hardworking. He said that his father did very well and is a really good role model. The same is true with his mother. "My mother is an entrepreneur. She deals with people very well."

Undersecretary Valle describes success as, "When you have contentment in your life. You don't feel you have to struggle. You still have goals but you just work on it and feel confident that you can achieve it. Success is if you can help others become successful as well.

You're always appreciative of what you have and in what others have. You don't feel like you need to compete. *Hindi mo nafi-feel na may kulang pa.*" And at this point in his life, he definitely thinks that he had already attained his success, he said, "It's like putting more meaning or value on what you do, and it's more than just the money."

For someone who has already achieved so much in his life, surely there are a lot of people who look up to him as their role model. When asked about how he motivates others, he replied, "I can only motivate them by telling the story of my life. *Kasi hindi naman kami mayaman, e.* I have achieved a lot of things *sa buhay ko* which I think is possible for a lot of people, maybe much more. *Hindi lang nila nakikita* if they lose hope. I think there is more to you than sometimes you see (yourself). *Dapat i-open mo ang potential mo.* Everyday is a new day and new opportunity and I think you should take advantage of it."

These inspiring words from Undersecretary Valle can surely inspire many people to be the best version of themselves, to believe in their dreams and to strive harder to reach their goals. To achieve something, one must be willing to work hard for it, have the patience, and look at things in a positive perspective. **HB**



Undersecretary Valle, together with the "Physicians for Peace" team at the Department of Health Central Office.

Born and raised in the mountains of the Cordilleras and the City of Pines, Baguio resident Roger Tong-An is now known as the first ever registered nurse to be officially appointed by the government as Undersecretary of Health.

Undersecretary Roger Tong-An, who graduated from the St. Louis University (SLU) in Baguio City, has received recognitions for his active involvement in the campaign against Non-Communicable Diseases from the Philippine Nurses Association, International Council of Nurses (ICN), SLU and from the local government unit. He was also nominated as Board Member from 2017-2021 in the ICN, which is based in Geneva, Switzerland. While he has received numerous awards, he prefers not to rest on his laurels as he continuously discovers his greater relevance in the community as a public health servant. He is also an educator and a clinician.

On a personal note, Undersecretary Tong-An is a father to three children and married to Dr. Aleli de Vera Tong-An.

When asked on his beliefs and endeavors, he answered:

Philosophy in life

"My pursuit of success was not lenient as life hurled hard blows that tested the different variables of my being. Grueling challenges attempted to deflect the professional path I chose to traverse. But my unwavering drive to see the rainbow made me learn to put up with the rain. I exhausted immense amount of dedication and passion in the practice of my calling. I mustered as much fortitude as I could to take the high road in confronting the



Meet the First Registered Nurse UNDERSECRETARY OF HEALTH

Dr. Roger P. Tong-An, DMPA, MAN, RN

Undersecretary

Office for Policy and Health Systems II



Undersecretary Tong-An delivering his speech during the WHO Regional Committee meeting.

challenges that were looming in my horizon. Indeed, success favors those who foster a resolute and tenacious character.

It is also deemed salutary to augment our desire for knowledge. We must not let the mundane realities of life curtail our freedom to learn and grow because just when we think that we are at the pinnacle, there's more to come. We must also accept the challenge to rise above mediocrity and harness our capacity to contribute to the greater good of the community.

These are just some of the tenets that have become part and parcel in the realization of my personal and professional roadmap over the years. May this serve as template for others as they aspire to exude fire and brilliance in the pursuit of their own successes in life."

Inspiration

"When I embark on a certain endeavor, I think of its positive repercussions. If it spawns an advantage to me, my family and the community, it amplifies my momentum to give my best."

First Registered Nurse Undersecretary of DOH

"I feel honored to have been appointed as one of Department of Health's Undersecretaries. As I tread another riveting milestone, I aspire to be a key official who is worthy of emulation and admiration. I have fervent hopes that my appointment in the bureaucracy will impart inspiration and spark vigor amongst other equally deserving allied health professionals to tread the same path so that together, there will be a stronger and more resounding voice in the development of quality and sustainable policies and programs that aim to champion the health and

welfare of our people especially the impoverished, marginalized, and vulnerable.”

Proudest accomplishment

“Being a Nurse leader is one thing that I am proudest of. I was able to execute and maximize my leadership skills having been elected as the Chapter President (Davao City, Region XI), Governor and eventually as the National President of the Philippine Nurses Association (PNA). Along with other notable nursing leaders in the country, I lobbied for reforms to bring forth improvements in the nursing profession and uplift the morale of Filipino registered nurses.”

Advocacy

“As the Undersecretary of Health under the Office for Policy and Health Systems II, I aim to be a messenger of significant changes and sustainable reforms that

resonate the strategies stipulated in the Philippine Health Agenda with its battle cry as “All for Health towards Health for All”. I am anchored on developing policies that will help ameliorate the working conditions of our personnel in the bureaucracy. And although meaningful changes have already been instituted in the realm of public health, we must not rest on our laurels as it is imperative that we continue to contrive lofty perspectives and embark on dynamic and innovative approaches in responding to the evolving health needs of our people.”

Funniest thing happened recently

“During the oath-taking ceremony in Malacanang Palace, an old woman in red dress told me that I’m too young to be Undersecretary. Consequently, I just flashed a smile at her”. **HB**



Undersecretary Tong-An delivering his compelling speech as the keynote speaker during the oath taking of respiratory therapists.

Intimidating - this is the very first adjective that comes to my mind whenever I think of talking or associating with an official who is among the top of the Department of Health's (DOH) organizational chart. It is as if I am experiencing once again the nervousness I felt on the very first day of my college life, thinking that all the people around me might tease or make fun of me.

Since many DOH Executive Committee (Execom) members are new in today's administration, the Health Promotion and Communication Service staff were assigned to do a personality profile interview with each Execom member for the Health Beat issue. The moment that I heard this, I volunteered to interview Undersecretary Gerardo V. Bayugo, hoping that he is still as cool in answering questions when I first interviewed him as a writer with the People's Television Network for its "The Doctor Is In" show.

To my relief, he was exactly as I expected him to be. He



The One Who Makes You Feel At Ease . . .

Dr. Gerardo V. Bayugo, MPH, CESO III
Undersecretary
Office for Technical Services

answered all of my questions without any hesitations and the whole interview went well. Undersecretary Bayugo does have that talent to make you feel at ease.

"Nagpapatawa ako sa mga meeting. I think it

helps kasi productive, e. It's not just naglolokohan. Productive sa akin, in a sense that it relaxes people. The ambiance changes. It makes a lot of difference in terms of people are contributing, people are clearly thinking and mas free na mag-express whatever they think, ke mababaw 'yan, ke malalim 'yan, ke funny 'yan



Showing his gentlemanly ways, Undersecretary Bayugo is holding the umbrella for Secretary Ubial on the wreath-laying ceremony during the celebration of Sight-Saving Month.

o hindi. That's what joking or being funny contributes. It's part of the strategy and I feel happy doing that. That helps me relax also. It helps me manage things better. *Style ko 'yun, e,"* Undersecretary Bayugo explained.

Simply amazing

Undersecretary Bayugo rose from humble beginnings as a Municipal Health Officer, serving in a community hospital and Rural Health Unit in Cavite until he became a Regional Director in Region V (Bicol), National Capital Region, and Region IV-A (CaLaBaRZon). He was further promoted as an Assistant Secretary of Health prior to becoming the Undersecretary.

"Before that, I was with the DOH Nutrition Service as Director and, *ang di ko makakalimutan doon,* which I consider part of the special period in my career, was when I headed the Micronutrient Program. *Sinimulan namin* with Secretary Juan Flavier that time, *iyong "Araw ng Sangkap Pinoy,"* *iyong* fortification of our food products with vitamin A, Iron, and Iodine. It was during those times in the early 90s that I saw the value in what we did in public health," he added. It is no wonder he earned his title and the respect of the people in the Department.

He describes himself as GOD fearing. "I work with passion, so I am also able to enjoy my work, hoping that I can contribute to the next generation of Filipinos and humanity, in general. *Ganoon lang kasimple,* that's how I get my drive."

"I love my family and I work to earn so I can support them. *Simple. Walang arte.* I don't expect special treatment or special favor. If you do your job well, and you're my partner, we'll go along very well. Let's



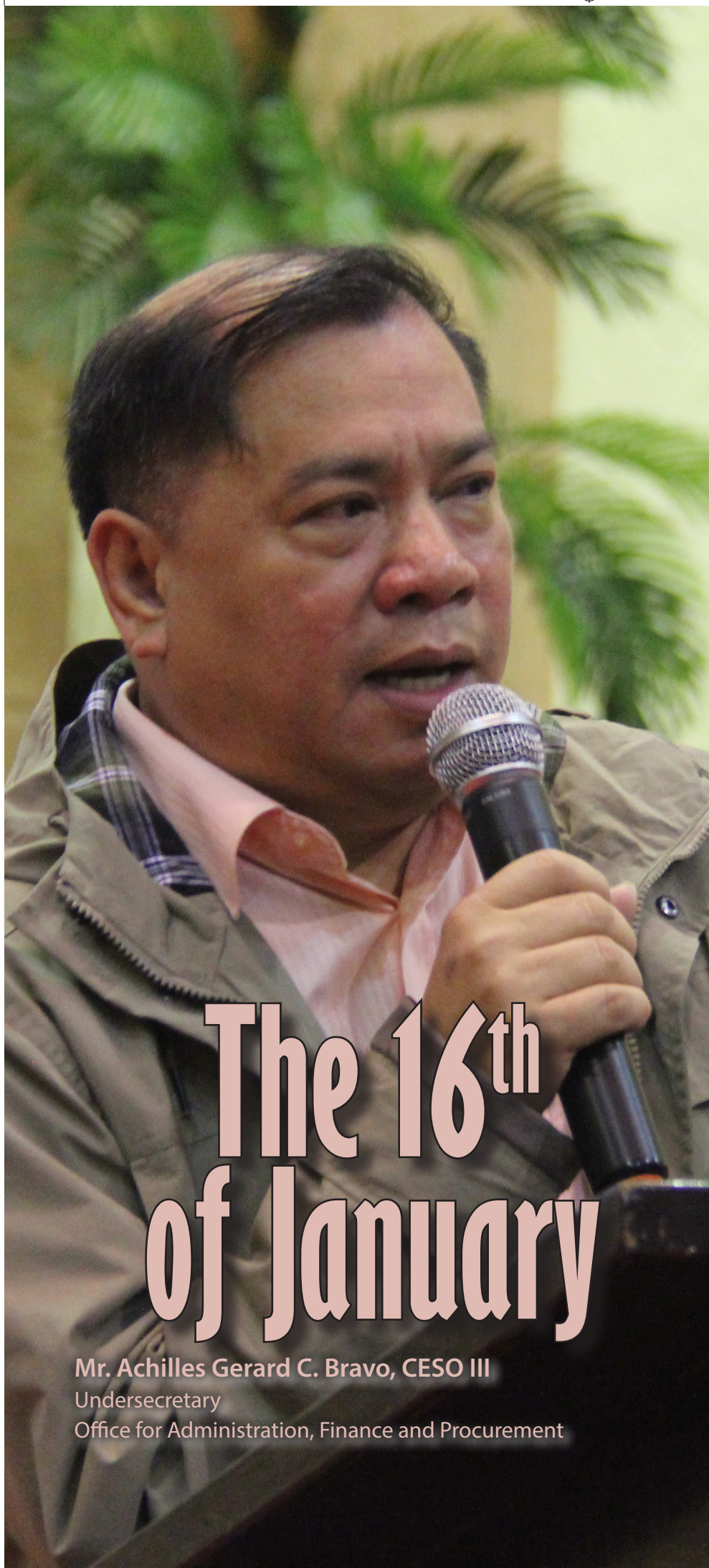
As he is always open to joining the activities of the DOH, he is shown during the "Check Neck Mo, Now Na" activity of the Thyroid Cancer Awareness Week.

just do our job very well and I'll be happy."

There's no bad in dreaming

When asked if he sees himself becoming a Secretary of Health someday, he has this to say: "Of course, everybody, most of the doctors I think, at least once in their time, dreamed *at nag-isip na maging Secretary.* Although, *wala akong* political ambition, *wala akong kadikit na malakas na politiko na tatakbo na president,* but still, miracles sometimes happen. We already had three career officials who became Secretaries of Health, namely: Secretary Carmencita Reodica, Secretary Manuel Dayrit, and Secretary Paulyn Jean Rosell-Ubial.

Truly a man for others, molded in humor, charisma, and passion for excellence... Undersecretary of Health Gerardo V. Bayugo. **HB**



The 16th of January

Mr. Achilles Gerard C. Bravo, CESO III
Undersecretary
Office for Administration, Finance and Procurement

Who would have thought that a date could repeatedly bear so much significance in one's lifetime? Well, it is for Undersecretary Achilles Gerard C. Bravo.

Undersecretary Bravo and his wife, Mrs. Venus Theresa Lomantas Bravo, were both born on January 16. 25 years ago, they decided to get married and this year marks their silver wedding anniversary. He was also appointed as Department of Budget and Management's (DBM) Regional Director of CARAGA Region on the same date. Indeed, it is a special date for him personally and professionally.

Undersecretary Bravo was born in Digos, Davao del Sur in 1960. His parents, Reserve Military Officer and Councilor Mr. Santos Momo Bravo Sr. and Mrs. Lourdes Cañizares Bravo, were both teachers. He has five children with his wife who is a successful businesswoman.

In college, he joined a religious order known as the Congregation of Passion and entered the St. Gabriel's College Seminary in Baguio City (CY 1976-1980). As a pilot program of the Congregation, he, together with the other seminarians, studied at St. Louis University (SLU) and finished a degree in Bachelor of Science in Psychology minor in Philosophy. In 1979-1980, he became cross-registrant of University of the Philippines-College of Baguio. He then had his Masters in Psychology in SLU with coordination with the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, where all their lecturers were



Undersecretary Bravo answering the questions of the press about the “Iwas Papatok” Campaign.

visiting professors from that University. He also took Master in Public Health at University of Southern Philippines in Davao City as a scholar of the United States Agency for International Development.

Undersecretary Bravo’s career started as a Community Relations Officer in National Housing Authority in Quezon City. Then he moved to DBM Central Office, where he worked as Compensation and Classification Analyst. After two years, he was promoted as Compensation and Classification Specialist. Two years later, he transferred to DBM Regional Office XI as Senior Budget Field Specialist for a year and Supervising Budget Specialist for three years. Thereafter, he held different top level positions: Chief Budget Specialist for five years, Director III for five years, and Director IV for eight years. He was Director IV of DBM Regional Office XIII (CARAGA Region) for almost four years before he was appointed as Undersecretary at Department of Health (DOH) Office for Administration, Finance and Procurement. When asked if he ever did worry about money, he answered “yes, even up until now.”

“However, starting a family was the most difficult one. Everyone who is or has been in the same can relate to this. As a parent you must work harder to save for your family’s everyday needs, for house and for children’s education,” Undersecretary Bravo stressed.



Undersecretary Bravo together with his lovely family.



Kim Velasco of Healthbeat interviewing Undersecretary Bravo how he started his journey in health.

But despite all the hard work, one must not forget to have a time to relax, to have fun, and to create new memories.

"I love spending time with family. They are my

inspiration and motivation to go on," he said.

He added that he loves to read books and even has a mini library in his house and shelves with books in his office.

When asked on what he would do if he finds a lottery ticket in his front door that ends up winning ten (10) million pesos, he simply said, "I will set aside a portion for my family, then give some to the church and charity or foundation." As a former seminarian, he never forgets to help and to donate. "*Kung ano pwede kong itulong, tutulong talaga ako,*" he added. When asked about how he overcame difficult situation, he humbly answered, "I'm very much optimistic about life because in every difficult situation there must be something good that will come out from it."


If given another life to live, he said "I would still like to be what I am right now."

What would he advise should he meet his 25-year old self right now? He answered: "save money, spend time wisely and go travel." **HB**









Navigating the Politics of Health

Dr. Mario C. Villaverde, MPH, MPM
Undersecretary
Office for Health Regulation

The health of a nation entails more than knowing the demography and health strategies. It also requires an understanding of the politics within the health care system. An amplitude of knowledge, the wealth of reality in the field, and an unwavering passion to address gaps in public health implementation are ideal drivers towards the attainment of the country's vision for health. A person exemplifying such qualities and leadership in the Department of Health (DOH) is Undersecretary Mario C. Villaverde.

Undersecretary Villaverde graduated as a Doctor of Medicine from the University of Santo Tomas in Manila. He also took residency in pediatrics. Preparatory to a medical degree, he took Bachelor of Science at the Aquinas University graduating at the top of his class as Magna cum Laude. He completed his Master of Public Health (MPH) at the University of the Philippines-Manila where he ranked second place in his graduating class. In 2003, he was awarded a scholarship as a Lee Kuan Yew Fellow and graduated with a Master in Public Management (MPM) under a joint program of the National University of Singapore and the Harvard University – Kennedy School of Government.

After graduating from medical school, he worked as a rural physician in Quezon province and as a resident physician in pediatrics at the Veterans Regional Hospital in Nueva Vizcaya.

Such exposure gave him a firm perspective of the needs and aspirations of health workers as well as health inequalities on the ground, which have been very relevant to his previous and current assignments in the DOH.

In 1995, he was appointed as the Director of Environmental Health Service and thus spearheaded national policies and programs on environment sanitation and environmental health impact assessment. After a year, he passed the Career Executive Service Officers board exam, which brought his career on a roll. In 1999, as Special Assistant to the Secretary of Health, he headed the development of the Philippines Health Sector Reform Agenda, the Philippines National Objectives for Health and the re-engineering of the DOH, which eventually became the framework of all the major reform strategies, policy changes and public investments of DOH as well as activities aimed at improving the way health care is delivered, regulated and financed.

In 2000, he was appointed as the first Director of the newly created Health Policy Development and Planning Bureau, which is tasked to manage and coordinate health sector policy development, planning and research. In 2005, he was appointed as Assistant Secretary for Health. In 2007, he was eventually promoted to Undersecretary of Health and designated to oversee policy and program development on disease surveillance, disease prevention and control, health promotion, health emergency management and health facilities development.

In 2010, he accepted a short-term appointment as technical officer on health promotion at the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office. He was instrumental

in finalizing the Regional Framework for Scaling up and Expanding Healthy Cities in the Western Pacific.

Turn of events has opened an opportunity for Usec. Villaverde in 2011 when he served as the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs of the Ateneo School of Government (ASoG) for six years. He initiated the restructuring of the Master in Public Management (MPM) program and the development of the curriculum for health governance. He also spearheaded several executive education programs and researches on leadership, public management and health development. Teaching served as his instrument in imparting knowledge that he had acquired from decades of study and practice. At present, he still finds time to teach public policy and health governance in a part-time basis at ASoG and the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP).

Currently, as an Undersecretary of Health, he is tasked to oversee the development and implementation of policies related with the regulation and licensing of health facilities, health products, quarantine services and international health surveillance. He is bent on implementing five strategic thrusts to address the current challenges in health regulation. These are: (1) review and update mandates, functions and structures of regulatory offices; (2) streamline regulatory programs, systems and processes; (3) enhance human resource capacity; (3) ensure transparency and accountability; and (4) improve responsiveness to stakeholders.

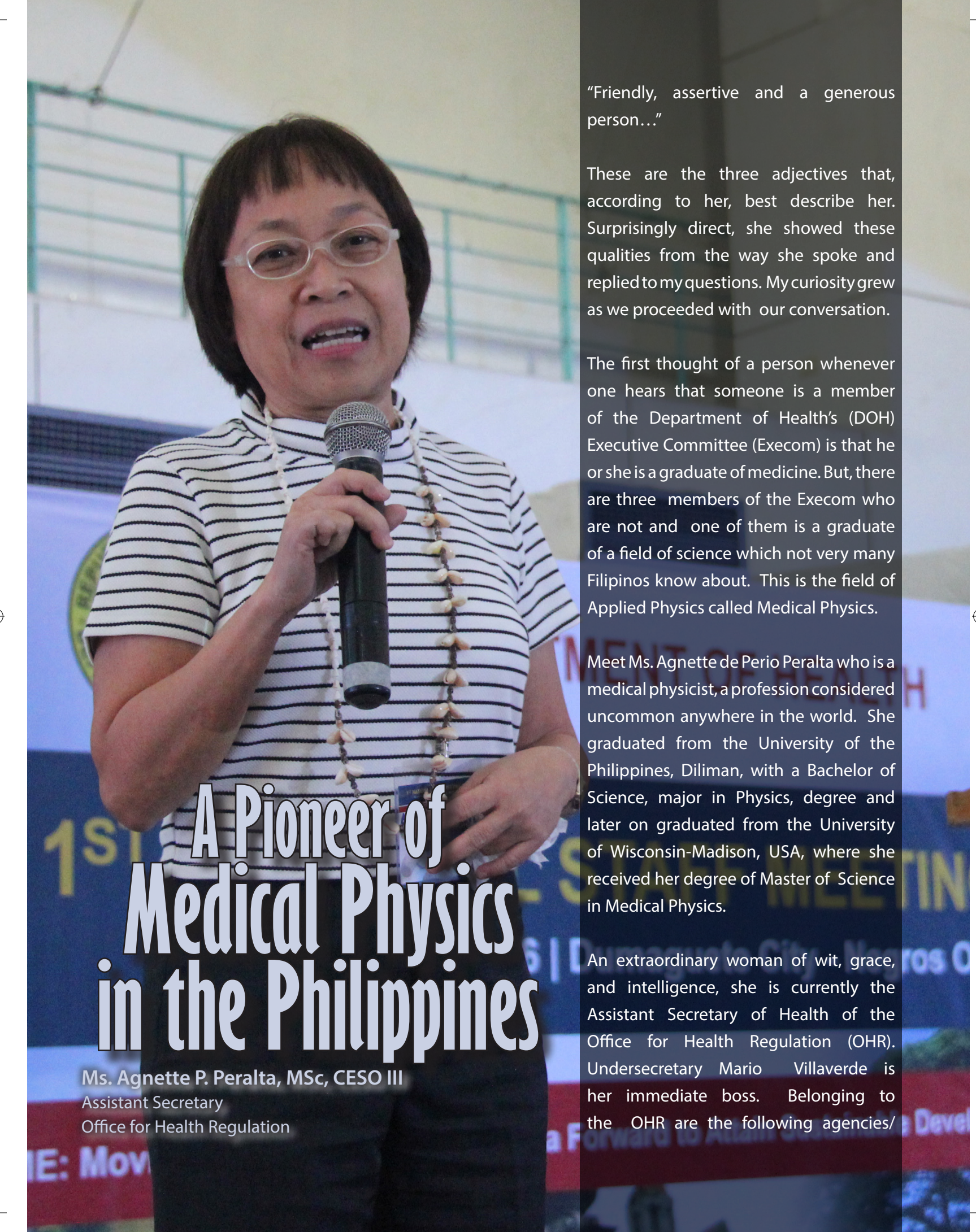
In recognition of his various accomplishments in the public service, he was given the THOMAS Award in 2007 as most outstanding alumnus for government service by the University of Santo Tomas Medical Alumni Association. He was also conferred by the President of the Philippines with the GAWAD

CES Award as an outstanding government career executive officer for 2010. The University of the Philippines College of Public Health recognized him as most outstanding alumnus during its 85th foundation anniversary in 2012.

Undersecretary Villaverde is definitely not a lightweight newcomer to the public health sector. Backed by decades of carefully earned expertise, his presence will no doubt fortify the current leadership of the DOH, helping the nation navigate its way through the stormy politics of public health. **HB**



Undersecretary Villaverde with Secretary Ubial during his oath-taking.



A Pioneer of Medical Physics in the Philippines

Ms. Agnette P. Peralta, MSc, CESO III
Assistant Secretary
Office for Health Regulation

“Friendly, assertive and a generous person...”

These are the three adjectives that, according to her, best describe her. Surprisingly direct, she showed these qualities from the way she spoke and replied to my questions. My curiosity grew as we proceeded with our conversation.

The first thought of a person whenever one hears that someone is a member of the Department of Health’s (DOH) Executive Committee (Execom) is that he or she is a graduate of medicine. But, there are three members of the Execom who are not and one of them is a graduate of a field of science which not very many Filipinos know about. This is the field of Applied Physics called Medical Physics.

Meet Ms. Agnette de Perio Peralta who is a medical physicist, a profession considered uncommon anywhere in the world. She graduated from the University of the Philippines, Diliman, with a Bachelor of Science, major in Physics, degree and later on graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA, where she received her degree of Master of Science in Medical Physics.

An extraordinary woman of wit, grace, and intelligence, she is currently the Assistant Secretary of Health of the Office for Health Regulation (OHR). Undersecretary Mario Villaverde is her immediate boss. Belonging to the OHR are the following agencies/



Photo was taken on Sept. 5, 2016 after the oath-taking of Assistant Secretary Peralta. (From R-L: Ms. Esperanza Caranting of the Health Human Resource Development

programs: the Food and Drug Administration which has four centers: the Center for Drug Regulation and Research, the Center for Food Regulation and Research, the Center for Cosmetics Regulation and Research, and the Center for Device Regulation, Radiation Health, and Research; the Health Facilities and Services Regulatory Bureau; the Bureau of Quarantine; and an attached agency, the Philippine Institute for Traditional and Alternative Health Care.

Assistant Secretary Peralta was the Director IV of the Center for Device Regulation, Radiation Health, and Research (CDRRHR) before being promoted in 2016 to her current position of Assistant Secretary. She started her career in the DOH as a health physicist in 1975 in the Radiation Health Office (RHO), one year

after its creation. The RHO was the national regulatory agency for radiation from electrical/electronic devices. It eventually became the CDRRHR and the functions of regulation of medical and health-related devices was added to its original function.

Just like many DOH employees/officials, Assistant Secretary Peralta has served in various DOH or inter-agency committees/task groups in addition to her regular duties in her mother office.

She was seconded for five months in 2004 as a consultant of the World Health Organization in its headquarters in Geneva. Her main research and work interests have been radiation protection, radiation dosimetry, and radiation regulation.



Department Bureau, Assistant Secretary Peralta, Secretary of Health Paulyne Jean B. Rosell-Ubial, and Ms. Nilda Silvera of the Health Facilities and Services Regulatory Bureau)

She has also been a member of the International Advisory Committee of the World Health Organization - Electromagnetic Fields project.

She served as a project officer for several DOH projects, the most recent completed one being as the national project coordinator for the International Atomic Energy Agency Regional Cooperative Agreement RAS 6038 project entitled "Strengthening of Medical Physics through Education and Training in Asia and the Pacific."

She was elected and served as a member from 2004 to 2016 (for four of these years as the only Asian) of the Main Commission of the International Commission on Non-ionizing Radiation Protection, a 14-person,

non-stock, non-profit independent scientific organization which "provides scientific advice and guidance on the health and environmental effects of non-ionizing radiation (NIR) to protect people and the environment from detrimental NIR exposure."

She is the founding president of the Philippine Organization of Medical Physicists (POMP). POMP is now the Society of Medical Physicists in the Republic of the Philippines. She has been active in the national, regional, and international organizations of medical physicists. She also served as president of the South East Asian Federation of Organizations for Medical Physics for two years.

Assistant Secretary Peralta is also a part-time

professorial lecturer at the University of Santo Tomas Graduate School masteral program in medical physics. This program was established in 1981 as a joint project of the DOH, Philippine Atomic Energy Commission, and University of Santo Tomas with technical assistance from the International Atomic Energy Agency.

According to her, medical physics is the application of physics in medicine. "In medical radiation physics, we work with different types of radiation such as alpha, beta, and gamma rays, x-rays, visible light, ultraviolet and infrared rays, lasers, radio frequency and microwave radiation, ultrasound waves, etc. Some of the things we do are the following: 1. We quantify and measure them (radiation dosimetry). 2. We study how they are produced, their properties and their different interactions with matter (radiation physics). 3. We determine their safe levels and how to protect people from their detrimental effects (radiation protection)," she further explained.

She added that "medical physicists usually work in the diagnostic radiology, nuclear medicine, and radiation oncology departments of hospitals, in radiation regulatory agencies, in medical research agencies or medical physics departments of universities."

Despite her success, she also experienced failures in her life. As they say struggles help define a person. "I have had one major failure as the head of my Office. I failed to influence four persons within my sphere of influence who did not change for the better and so the Office had to let them go," she shared.

When she was asked if she sees herself as a future Secretary of Health, she candidly replied, "How can I? I'm retiring this year. You're so funny..."

Is there a chance? "No, I'm a physicist. I believe that the Secretary of Health should be a medical doctor."

When asked what was the funniest thing that ever happened to her, she shared the following: "Instead of talking about the funniest thing that ever happened to me, I'll make *kwento na lang*, about one of the funniest things I've witnessed. When I was in the U.S., there was this little boy who is a Filipino, whose parents are also Filipino. The father was a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin just like myself but in another field. The little boy was, I think, four or five years old. He was wearing the uniform of a football player, so I said to him, 'Oh, so you're a football player; what are you? Are you a fullback? Are you a quarterback?' The little boy answered, 'No, I'm a backpack!'"

"Maybe, *iyon ang parating naririnig nya sa mommy niya*, 'Don't forget your backpack! Don't forget your backpack!' So, backpack *daw sya*." "I found it so cute; once in a while I remember that child. *Binata na siguro ngayon. Ay, gosh, that was 1981! Tatay na siya ngayon!*"

My conversation with Assistant Secretary Peralta could have gone on and on because I knew she had a lot of stories to tell, but reluctantly I had to end it. It was both a privilege and a pleasure to have interviewed ASec Peralta who has contributed so much in the development of medical physics in the Philippines and in the strengthening and growth of her original Office. She is a woman who has dedicated her life to serving our country and has truly made a difference through her work in the Department of Health which she has served for almost forty-two years. **HB**



IN THE MIDST OF THE CROWD

Dr. Abdullah B. Dumama, Jr., CESO III
Assistant Secretary
Mindanao Cluster

He works, and then he plays. He works hard, and then he plays cool.

In the midst of the crowd, there is always one who serves as an inspiration to others. Like someone who takes the lead. In the midst of different faces, there is always one who catches a thousand glances.

But this one is different from the others, just when you thought you have known him all along, you are dead wrong.

WHAT we see: He plans on purpose, acts beyond words, and leads beyond actions. Being the Assistant Secretary of Health for Mindanao Cluster and Regional Director of DOH Regional Office XI where he dedicates his life, Assistant Secretary Abdullah B. Dumama Jr. always moves heaven and earth to make a difference in the lives of others. As a bridging leader, he believes that meaningful engagements with partners and stakeholders are key instruments for holistic breakthroughs in health. With this, he has steered DOH RO XI in rising to the challenge of reducing , if not totally eradicating infant and maternal mortality by creating a coalition of change, the Team D CHAMPS, Team Davao's Coalition of Health Advocates for Mothers' and Infants' Safety and Protection with the vision of, "*Walang Nanay at Sanggol ang Mamamatay dahil sa Panganganak.*" He was awarded as Distinguished Alumnus in Community Service of

Transformational Leadership in Public Health by Davao Medical School Foundation. Health Leadership and Governance Excellence Award was given to him by Zuellig Family Foundation. The long list of his awards go on and on and on.

Knowing that true service requires dedication and commitments, he always aims to go forward and be an epitome of courage to his comrades. He always sets his goals on where the standards are based. In every step of the way, he wanted to get things done. It makes him the charming guy who could turn things into gold. But it does not end there.

Have you ever asked who he is, looking from a different lens? Maybe we focus so much on how he is at work but only a few has ever seen the other side of him. The other side that will surely make you crack a smile. The other side that makes you wonder: How in the world can a man be a paradox of brain and hilarity, of wit and humor?

WHAT we do not to see: He is also the man who loves sports and would die for it. And his favorite sport? Golf! A certified golf addict, indeed. He is also the same man who goes to the mall and buys the same style of shoes but of different colors. Cool, right? He is exactly the same man who would ask where he left his eyeglasses when in fact he is wearing them. Ooppss! Did I just mention it? Just forget the word. But really, he is the one who makes you laugh when its time to. And the one who can make you think at the same time.

You see, in this busy, fast-paced field we are in, here is this one man who can bring humor and mirth to others. Here is this man who can exactly make us pause and laugh for a moment while inspiring us to go on and be of service to others. **HB**



PLGP DeepDive at Brgy. Paloc, Maragusan, Compostela Valley Province.



Taken during the 3rd High Level Meeting on South Cooperation for Child Rights in Asia Pacific held in Malaysia last November 6-8, 2016.



A day after typhoon Pablo made a landfall, Assistant Secretary Dumama visited one of the hardly hit municipalities in Compostela Valley Province, New Bataan.

A HEART FOR THE MARGINALIZED

Dr. Maria Francia M. Laxamana, MHSa, MHA, CHS
Assistant Secretary of Health
Office for Technical Services

Assistant Secretary Maria Francia Laxamana received her medical degree from the University of Sto. Tomas in 1983 and finished her residency training in the Anaesthesia Department of the Philippine General Hospital in 1992. She finished her Master's Degree in Health Services Administration with Major in Hospital Administration from Ateneo De Manila University Graduate School of Business in July 2000, as well as her Master's Degree in Community Health Services from the same institution in July 2001. After which, she was granted an InWENT Scholarship which led her to complete her Certificate in District Health Services and Management in 2004 from the Ateneo De Manila University Graduate School of Business and Certificate in International Course On Global Health Care Financing and Social Health Insurance from Siem Reap, Cambodia in 2009. She is currently pursuing her Doctoral Degree (PhD) in Educational Leadership and Management from St. Joseph College.

As Assistant Secretary of Health, her advocacy lies in developing and strengthening policies and strategies to improve availability, accessibility and affordability of quality health care services to the marginalized sector, specifically the PWDs and indigenous people.

Her expertise lies in various fields of health, namely,

- health systems strengthening
- public health administration
- hospital and health services management
- health policy development
- programs & project management, implementation, monitoring & evaluation.

In the past years of her work experience in the health development sector, she was able to take part in the health program implementation and evaluation in the different levels of the health system; first-hand experience from the grassroots level (Rural Health Unit in the Local Government Unit), national government (Department of Health), with international development agencies (USAID, EU, Save the Children) to the international health institutions (WHO).

With such an extensive work experience in public health and development work, Dr. Laxamana aims to work for the improvement of the quality of health services in the country to ensure better health outcomes for the citizenry. **HB**



UNASSUMING AND ADMIRABLE

Ms. Maria Carolina V. Taiño, CPA, MGM, CESO IV
Assistant Secretary
Office for Administration, Finance and Procurement

“Professionally, I think I’ve gone far for a simple person like me and I’m very thankful for whatever will come my way,” this is how a wife and a mother who became an Assistant Secretary of Health answered the question on what are the other remaining goals in her professional bucket list.

Assistant Secretary Ma. Carolina Vidal-Taiño was born in Manila on September 27, 1960. She came from a big family with eight siblings. Her parents, both deceased, were Atty. Pablo Aguirre Vidal Sr., former Chief of the Department of Health (DOH) Legal Service and Rosalina Cimafranca Teologo, a full time housewife. Despite being a single parent, she was able to raise her three boys who have all graduated with bachelor’s degree and are now gainfully employed and lovingly raising her very special girl who is the princess of the family into a world of normal life.

HONORABLE EXPERIENCES

She started her career in DOH as an Accounting Clerk I in 1982 and eventually rose from the ranks to Accountant II position. In 1987, she was transferred to the DOH Biologicals Production Service initially as Budget Office I, then Budget Officer III. In 2000, pursuant to Executive Order 102, she was re-appointed as Chief Accountant at the Accounting Division of Finance Service and later promoted as Director III of Finance Service until

the 30th of May 2013. On May 31, 2013, she was promoted as Director IV of the Internal Audit Service. March 2016, she was appointed as Officer-in-Charge, Assistant Secretary for the Office of Administration, Finance and Procurement. With the approval of her appointment by President Rodrigo R. Duterte, her position as Assistant Secretary was confirmed, and takes her Oath of Office in Malacañang on January 9, 2017.



During the UNICEF activity in Geneva.

She took her elementary schooling at Bonifacio Elementary School from 1968-1974, secondary at Teodora Alonzo High School from 1974-1978 and was awarded Cadette of the Year. Then she graduated with a B.S. Accountancy degree from the Far Eastern University in 1982. She also finished her Master's Degree in Government Management in San Pedro College of Business and Arts, with distinction.

She was a civil service eligible both Sub-Professional and Professional during her college days and became a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) in 1984. She did not take the CPA board exam right after graduation because she was able to land a job in DOH and wants to pay for her tuition fee in the review school. With

God's grace, after two years, she took the exam and passed it on the first take. In 2010 she passed the Career Executive Service Officer Eligibility examinations and trainings.

AN EXCEPTIONAL MOTHER, FRIEND, AND LEADER.



Assistant Secretary Taiño with her children.

"I can say that my mother is different from any mother that I know. She does a man's work like carpentry, painting fences, carrying heavy loads, and climbing trees. But despite of her strong side she is a very loving, caring, understanding and hands-on mother to us. Her very soft side is that she always makes us feel we are complete because she is always there when ever we need her. I admire her when it comes to carrying and solving problems. She makes the imperfect, perfect and the best example is the way she is raising our only princess, Eunise. If you could only know my mother, you'll know why we love her

very much," his son Ervin disclosed.

As a leader and a friend, Ms. Rowena Lora from the Internal Audit Service of the DOH has this to say: "I have known Assistant Secretary Taiño for the last 15 years as my supervisor and mentor and I have observed that she possesses qualities and characteristic of a good leader. She instills confidence by showing her subordinates clear vision while also being a strong coach. She also possessed positivity between work challenges, thus fostering a culture of optimism in the organization she leads. While as a friend, she is somebody that most employees in the Department consider as true, dependable, and loyal friend. She is very supportive and celebrates success of her friends. She is somebody you can rely on without expecting anything in return. I consider her as gem in my life."

As she is a real blessing to all the people around her, another friend from the office, Ms. Nemencia Angelio

describes her expertise and great camaraderie. "As a leader, particularly in finance, procurement and administrative concerns, she knows her way and possesses the skills and expertise needed for her role. She empowers her staff to perform according to the mandate of their particular position and delegates responsibilities to encourage self-discipline, self-enrichment, confidence and resourcefulness. She also poster cooperation and interaction among the staff and intervene to beat out internal conflicts. Despite her rise to power, she is approachable, easy to talk to and not bias to anybody regardless of position. And as a friend, she is generous, protective and cares for the welfare of others especially those lose to her. She listens and gives advises when needed. She is considerate and understanding regarding the journey or condition of her friends. She is not only generous with advises but extend help financially and morally." **HB**



During the Internal Audit Strategic Planning year 2015



A MAN OF SIMPLICITY

Dr. Nestor F. Santiago, Jr., MPH, MHA, CESO

Assistant Secretary
Office for Field Implementation and Management

Born and raised in the small town of Cabusao, Camarines Sur, Dr. Nestor F. Santiago Jr. learned his value of humility and selfless public service from his parents who were also public health workers.

Currently the Assistant Secretary for Field Implementation Management in this Department, he earned his Bachelor's Degree at the Aquinas University of Legazpi and finished Doctor of Medicine at the Bicol Christian College of Medicine. He completed two post graduate studies – Primary Health Care Management at the Istituto Superiore di Sanita in Rome, Italy and Masters in Health Services Administration Major in Hospital Administration, at the Ateneo Graduate School of Business. He is a Fellow of the Philippine College of Hospital Administrators.

Dr. Santiago's journey in the government service started in 1988 as the first Municipal Health Officer of Sta. Elena, Camarines Norte. "I am gratified that I served this poor far-flung town. I am even more proud to say that I am a probinsyanong doktor," he said.

With a career spanning almost 29 years in government service, Dr. Santiago has taken various leadership positions. In 2003, he

earned his career executive service rank. He was the Chief of Bicol Sanitarium prior to his promotion as Assistant Regional Director. It was during his term that the hospital was awarded with the “National Wellness Award for Distinction in Innovation Program”.

Through hard work, perseverance and good leadership, he served as the Regional Director of Bicol Region for almost 9 years. During this time, he developed the Health Emergency Management System in Bicol and pursued nationwide implementation of the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for Sexual and Reproductive Health in Emergencies and Disasters after his training in Sydney, Australia sponsored by UNFPA. His passion to help people in crisis earned him the title as the “Father of MISP” by UNFPA.



During the retrieval of the remains of late of Secretary Jesse Robredo

Other positions he held in concurrent capacity were as Officer-in-Charge of the Bicol Regional Training and Teaching Hospital (BRTTH), Bicol Medical Center (BMC) and the Dr. Jose Fabella Memorial Hospital (DJFMH) as well as head of the National Nutrition Council of Bicol. He also initiated the establishment of the DOH Treatment and Rehabilitation Center in Camarines Sur.

His journey in the DOH Central Office began in 2012

when he was assigned as Director of the Bureau of Local Health Development. Because of his vast experience in working with Local Government Units, he campaigned for strengthening of health leadership and governance as an important strategy in improving health systems development. He paved the way for the partnership of the DOH with the Zuellig Family Foundation for the implementation of the Health Leadership and Governance Program (HLGP) in 2013. As the concurrent Director of Regional Office CALABARZON, he championed the HLGP’s Municipal Leadership Governance Program, strengthened the Health Emergency Management System and implemented the Incident Command System.

He believes that to be a good public servant, one should keep in mind that the job is to serve the people. He shares that the secret to staying in service is the fulfillment one gets in serving our countrymen. “There will be no problem if you do your job right, and you’ll feel the joy in your heart when you see the result of your work,” he added.

Being an Assistant Secretary, the endless appointments and schedules take up most of his time, but Dr. Santiago manages his time between work and personal life quite well. He defines a successful life as living simply and just doing things responsibly. This can be seen in his everyday routine. During weekends, he can usually be seen wearing a simple shirt, jeans and sneakers. He also loves to eat with his bare hands. Sweets, such as ice cream and chocolates with nuts, and as a Bicolano, anything with gata (coconut milk) and chili are his favorites.

He is also quite fond of Dunkin’ Donuts brewed coffee. He shared a story when he was abroad recently. He had a photo of himself taken in front of a Dunkin’ Donuts outlet and promptly sent it to his secretary.

This elicited laughter from his staff knowing his love for its brewed coffee. Eachtime he travels abroad, he never misses the opportunity of enjoying a cup of his favorite Dunkin' Donuts coffee. "There is no other coffee that can really make my day," he declared.

He was also asked random questions which he answered good-naturedly.

If he were to be reborn as an animal, what animal he could be, he answered "A dog, probably, because a dog is a man's best friend and is loyal to his master"

He also chooses love over money.

Kiss or hug? He answered, "Both of course".

If he were to be arrested, it would be for stealing a kiss, he answered jokingly.

One thing that he doesn't believe in are "ghosts".

He loves to sing even if he can't sing well.

If he were not a doctor, he would probably be a priest.

With all of his experiences and achievements, Dr. Santiago believes that humility is the key to his success. He is indeed a simple man who dreamed of becoming a physician to help people especially the poor. His dedication to serve the people has lead him

to where he is now. **HB**



Assistant Secretary Santiago with Dr. Lilia Daguinon, Chief of Hospital, Felipe Abrigo Memorial Hospital in Guiuan (Hospital Tent in Guiuan) during the typhoon Yolanda



Secretary Ubial visits the Bicol Regional Training and Teaching Hospital together with Assistant Secretary Santiago and Regional Director Napoleón Arevalo



Orientation of the Bulacan/PMA Medical Team led by Assistant Secretary Santiago.

Dr. Elmer G. Punzalan is the Assistant Secretary of Health and Cluster Head of the Office for Special Concerns where the Dangerous Drugs Abuse Treatment and Prevention Program (DDAPTP) is under.

Assistant Secretary Punzalan was raised in the province. He was a product of Don Bosco Academy of Pampanga. As a student, he was very diligent and was a consistent honor student. He took up Bachelor of Science in General Medicine for his Preparatory Medicine in the University of Santo Tomas. He earned his doctorate degree in Manila Central University-Filemon D. Tanchoco Medical Foundation. He was awarded most outstanding alumnus of the MCU-FDTMF College of Medicine in 2006, in 2007, and in 2008 therefore catapulted him to the hall of fame status

He has two Masteral degrees, in Health Services Administration (MHSA) and in Hospital Administration (MHA) from the Ateneo de Manila University Graduate School of Business where he was a consistent Dean's lister.

Asec. Punzalan had his training in general surgery at the MCU-



Your Assistant and Partner in Health

Dr. Elmer G. Punzalan, FICS, MHA, MHSA
Assistant Secretary
Office for Special Concerns



FDTMF Hospital and his fellowship training in pediatric surgery at the Philippine Children's Medical Center.

Prior to entering the Department of Health in 2006, Dr. Punzalan was a practicing pediatric surgeon and a consultant in pediatric surgery in most hospitals in Central Luzon and Metro Manila both in government and private hospitals. A professor in pediatric surgery at the Angeles University Foundation College of Medicine and AUF Medical Center where he is also a benefactor and a trustee. He held several positions, such as Vice President for Medical Services and Medical Director of the Government Service Insurance System, a Member of the Board of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation and a board of director for both Equitable PCI Bank and Maxicare Health Insurance.

He is also the founder and proponent of the Philippine Society of Medical Specialists, Inc (PSMSI) in government service with more than 7,000 strong membership and growing. It is the biggest organization of medical specialists in the Philippines

and was constituted by an executive committee resolution during the term of Secretary Francisco Duque III.

Although he has a very busy life, with meetings here and there, Asec. Punzalan still finds time to serve the Lord. He is an active lay minister at the Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Chapel in Cardinal Santos Medical Center and a cooperator of OPUS DEI.

One of his best experiences was during the visit of Pope Francis because only few get a chance to see and speak with the Pope. As a Lay Minister, he was tasked by Archbishop Cardinal Tagle to prepare for all the health concerns of the Papal Visit Official entourage. Recalling his encounter with Pope Francis, he felt humbled and honored by his holy presence. It was like all of his stresses were gone and he felt renewed.

As an official of the Department of Health who advocates wellness, he walks the talk. In his spare time, he usually bikes, plays basketball or bowling to keep him fit and healthy. **HB**



Ariane Alvarez of Healthbeat interviewing Assistant Secretary Punzalan. Gladly sharing his experience on health and in life.

"A listener, more than a talker; an introvert more than the life of the party; a unique person, inspiring leader, passing wisdom to people around me to help to the betterment of the world. I know my path in life and who I am as a person that helps establish my image as a role model to the people who look up to me as one," Assistant Secretary Maria Bernardita Flores responded on how she describes herself.

She graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Community Nutrition at the College of Home Economics of the University of the Philippines Diliman in 1975, and a Master's Degree in Professional Studies on Food and Nutrition Planning in the same University in 1979 through a fellowship from the Government of the Philippines and the Netherlands Universities for International Cooperation. Seven years after, she obtained her Applied Diploma in Administrative Management at the University Center for International Studies of the University of Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania, USA, through a fellowship awarded by the H.J. Heinz Company Foundation. She was the first woman Fellow selected from more than 200 applicants from all over the world.

She and the National Nutrition Council (NNC) literally grew up together. Right after stepping out of the university, she joined the agency in November 1975 – when the agency was barely a year old, having been created in June 1974



YOUR COMPANION IN NUTRITION

Ms. Maria Bernadita T. Flores, CESO II
Assistant Secretary
National Nutrition Council

through Presidential Decree 491 or the Nutrition Act of the Philippines. She started her career in public service as a casual employee, paid on a daily basis at the NNC's Management Planning Division. In June 1976, she was given a plantilla position as Planning Officer II of the same Division. While moving up the ranks and given bigger responsibilities in the entire organization, she became a key mover and witnessed the actualization of NNC's role and vision as the country's highest policy-making and coordinating body on nutrition, recognized both globally and locally.



Until in 2007, She was given one of the biggest opportunities of her life and that was to lead the NNC as its Executive Director. She was given the opportunity to work "almost directly" under President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo when NNC, under her watch, was given oversight function over 29 government agencies implementing the Accelerated Hunger Mitigation Program, reporting to the Cabinet and the President almost every week from 2007 to mid-2010. President Arroyo promoted her as Assistant Secretary and Executive Director IV in May 2008.



Parallel to promotion in government service, she also moved up the Career Executive Service relatively fast. She was appointed to the rank of Career Executive Service Officer (CESO) V in 2006, promoted to CESO IV, and CESO III shortly and quickly in succession, and then to CESO II in 2009.

ROLES AS ASSISTANT SECRETARY

As Assistant Secretary of Health and concurrent Executive Director IV of the NNC, her main role is to be the instrument to the full realization of the Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition (PPAN), which will in turn contribute to achieving the "All For Health towards Health For All" goal of this administration.



Specifically, her main duties and responsibilities are to:

- 1) provide direction, supervise, and coordinate the operations of the NNC Secretariat, which is responsible for nutrition policy analysis and formulation, program planning and programming, project design and management; surveillance, monitoring and evaluation; advocacy, information and education, coordination and networking, and human resource development for the Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition; and to
- 2) represent the Secretary of Health in her/his capacity as Chair of the NNC Governing Board, when and if so requested.

WHEN ASKED IF SHE SEE HERSELF AS THE FUTURE SECRETARY...

"If given a chance and the opportunity, why not? With more than four decades of being in the public service, streamlining, improving, and implementing programs and processes in the administration, finance, regional operations, and technical services will not be a problem. And of course, with the help of our health

workers with unwavering work ethic, indefatigable passion, and steadfast commitment, we can achieve our health goals for the country. And if given a chance to lead the department, in the coming years, I will aspire to push nutrition forward in conjunction with all its stakeholders to further its understanding of nutrition within sectoral perspectives and on national development, gain a sharper perception of the health and nutrition needs of individuals, and stimulate ideas for future programs toward more efficient methods of communicating health and nutritional benefits for the Filipino people.

But I recognize that there are still a lot of things about health and medicine that I should study and I am willing to learn all these to better serve our fellow Filipinos."



DURING HER FREE TIME...

"For around seven years running, my Saturdays have been taken up by my hosting and broadcast duties in Radyo Mo Sa Nutrisyon, a 30-minute block-time radio program, 12:30p.m. to 1pm aired live (including Facebook live, Cignal TV, and internet streaming) over DZXL. I derive much pleasure in this "task" because I am able to reach many people with correct information on nutrition, health, and other developmental issues and programs with the help of my resource persons, Sec. Ubial included, and my co-host DZXL broadcaster Mr. Rod Marcelino. That I do not consider a loss of my free time.

But my body also craves for sleep so I indulge in it during what remains as weekends; and catch a movie once in a while. I enjoy reading books, biographies, history, and geography."

FUNNIEST THING THAT HAS HAPPENED TO HER RECENTLY

"I was so caught up in the recent observance of hearts day that when Tuesday came, I wore the reddish blouse uniform to office with all the mandatory touch of red accessories only to see, when I got to NNC, everyone wearing the gray uniform. Yikes! 50 shades of gray na lang ako." **HB**







Secretary Paulyn Jean Rosell-Ubial together with the Department of Health (DOH) Execom Members and DOH-Central Office Directors during the 1st National Staff Meeting 2016 in Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental.

