

PHILIPPINE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION



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It is my distinct honour to address all of you, my dear colleagues in the medical profession. Allow me to report on the various undertakings and thrusts pursued by this Philippine Medical Association (PMA) in aid of our goal of serving the Filipino nation.

The present times confront us with many challenges, from the effects of Global economic recession, unusual changes in climate and the environment, political unrest, scandal and corruption, including those which threaten to tarnish the integrity of Filipino doctors.

On the other hand, I look at it as an opportunity for the members and governors of the PMA, to demonstrate once more their dedication and willingness to serve the Association for the good of its members and the Filipino people.

It is in unity where we can bring back the trust and confidence of Filipinos and the international community in the integrity of the Filipino medical profession.

The PMA as a recap is the umbrella organization of physicians in the country with a current membership of 62,000, of which 32,000 are in good standing. It is the only Accredited Professional Organization in the field of medicine recognized by the Philippine Professional Regulation Commission.

It consists of 17 regions, each headed by an elected regional governor, organized under them are 118 component societies scattered all over the nation. At present, there are 8 specialty divisions, 64 specialty and subspecialty societies and 38 affiliate societies.

However, not all of the doctors in the Philippines are members of the Association. PMA's membership at present consists of about 60–65% of the total number of physicians registered with the Professional Regulation Commission, which still include those who have died, retired

or migrated in other countries.

Of the members who are in good standing, 50% of our membership has not been actively involved in the activities of the Association. With this relative “coldness” of some of our members to participate in our activities, the issue of RELEVANCE became a dominant factor with regards to the role that PMA plays in the life of every Filipino physician.

As such, the current officers and members of the Board of Governors through the leadership of our President, Dr. Rey Melchor Santos, have decided to reformat the programs of the PMA. Executive functions from the national leadership were decentralized to the regional governors and component society presidents, to ensure full implementation of the PMA programs to the farthest component society in the country.

With this reorientation of the thrust of the Association, programs were developed to guide the national leadership and all officers of all the component societies and associations under the PMA to all work together to achieve the common goal of making our respective associations relevant and important to all our members.

As physicians, our main priority is our patients whom we have sworn to serve; but as leaders of our associations, our main priority is to take care of our members and safeguard their interests with a sense of justice and fairness.

In order to be relevant in the eyes of our members, the PMA Board of Governors developed programs that focused on making each physician feel the importance of being a member of the PMA. At the same time, make them proud again as Filipino physicians who are regarded by his patients with the highest level of respect and dignity.

Four KEY AREAS were identified, and these are:

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- Membership Benefits and Professional Development
- Continuing Medical Education
- Legislative and Political Agendas
- Socio-Civic Activities and Advocacies

Membership Benefits and Professional Development

It is one of the PRIORITY AREAS, because we want the members to have a sense of belonging to the Association with an inherent feeling of the **Association existing for them, taking care of their needs, and protecting their interests.**

The **Mutual Aid Benefit Program (Death, Disability, and Legal Aids)** was reviewed, improved and made more relevant to the current needs of the members.

- The death benefit was increased
- The disability and Legal assistance benefit was likewise increased to make it more relevant to the needs of our members.

The present Board also believes that benefits should be given not only during the difficult times of death, disability or litigation, but during the time that members are actively involved in the affairs of the Association, without experiencing these unfortunate circumstances in a physician's life.

The Health Benefit Program is now structured to provide annual physical and routine medical examinations to our members for either free or at a subsidized rate.

The PMA is doing all it can to remind our members to take care of their health and that of their families. *"We can never keep the Nation healthy unless we are healthy ourselves."*

The PMA and all its specialty divisions have also worked hard to negotiate with our National Medical Insurance System or Philhealth to increase the benefits it gives to our physicians for professional services rendered to their members.

The Association has made improvements to our Doctor's Inn. It provides a decent and affordable place for our physicians to stay while in Metro Manila. Our auditorium and meeting rooms are also made available to our members and their friends for social gatherings and business meetings at very affordable costs.

We have organized a Committee to look after our senior physicians to develop benefit programs for them. The PMA recognizes the vital

role they have played in laying down the foundation of our Association for the past several years.

The PMA Code of Ethics was amended to strengthen further the ethical conducts of physicians and put a stop to the commercialization of the practice of medicine, a controversy that has tainted the good image of the Filipino physician here and abroad.

Important salient features of this code include provisions for maintaining the trust and confidence of our patients by maintaining strict confidentiality in our relationship with them. The code prohibits a physician from commercially endorsing any health products to maintain his independence and integrity.

The Code likewise aims to strengthen the harmonious relationship among physicians by providing guidelines for a referral network, making every physician complementary and not competitive to each other.

The Code also protects fellowship among physicians by prohibiting Filipino doctors to charge professional fees to fellow physicians and the immediate members of their family who are financially dependent on them.

Continuing Medical Education (CME)

It is one of the backbones of activities of the PMA. As a main provider of CME units, the PMA sees to it that it provides various avenues in updating the skills, knowledge and competencies of our members.

We are proud to say that the Filipino physicians are at par with our international counterparts in terms of medical skills and knowledge. The PMA holds regular regional scientific conventions, which culminate to our Annual Convention and Assembly.

The various specialty divisions and all the specialty societies under them also hold their own regular scientific activities to update their members relative to their specialties.

All of these are being done to ensure the global competitiveness of the Filipino Physician, particularly in the context of the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS), which will provide the Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA or reciprocity) among the 10 ASEAN member nations which includes the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Brunei

Darussalam.

Our various specialty divisions and their specialty societies have likewise been holding joint meetings with their international counterparts. These are concrete evidences that the PMA is indeed getting the recognition and respect from its international partners.

Legislative and Political Agenda

Our LEGISLATIVE AND POLITICAL AGENDA is focused on ensuring that good legislative bills beneficial to the health of our people as well as the practice of medicine are passed in Congress.

We have successfully worked for the approval of the Republic Act 9502 otherwise known as the “Universally Accessible Cheaper and Quality Medicines Act of 2008 minus the provision that mandates us physicians to prescribe only generic drugs. We were united on the issue, and it convinced the Philippine President to remove the controversial provision. We were able to explain that our opposition to the provision was not for our financial gain but was instead inspired by our desire to protect the health of our patients.

We knew that our Bureau Food and Drugs is still incapable of monitoring locally made and imported generics products and thus, cannot ensure their safety and good quality.

We have successfully prevented the passage of the Malpractice Bill since we believe that it will just add to the financial burden of our patients by encouraging the preventive practice of medicine. We instead are currently working with the Patients groups for an alternative Patient’s Rights Bill, which will inform patients of their rights and obligations and at the same time provide avenues for grievances.

We are now working hard for the passage of the Physicians Act of 2009. This will amend the Medical Act of 1959, making it more relevant to the demands and needs of the present times. It also contains the Integration of the PMA, which will make it mandatory for physicians to become members of PMA before they can practice medicine in the country.

This will allow the PMA to exercise self-regulation and at the same time discipline the very few that are destroying the image of the medical profession through their unethical practices. It has now passed the House of Congress;

it is scheduled to be taken up by the middle of November in the Philippine Senate.

Socio-Civic Activities and Advocacies

Our SOCIO-CIVIC ACTIVITIES AND ADVOCACIES are still primed on our Heal the Nation Program and Health Education Reform Order (HERO), which aims to:

1. To unify all physicians in the country to bond together and help develop a comprehensive program on health to complement the health reform agenda of the Department of Health
2. To address the various problems affecting the health sector today that may ultimately lead to a health crisis in the near future
3. To promote the advocacies of the Philippine Medical Association and build up further the trust, confidence and respect of the Filipinos to their physicians
4. To achieve unification among all sectors involved in health care delivery and encourage them to work together to help improve the health condition of the Filipino people
5. To coordinate with non medical sectors particularly the various NGOs, and work together in nation building and help address the various problems besetting the nation today

Dear colleagues, I am sure you are aware that the Philippines was recently devastated by a series of typhoons that claimed the lives of a lot of our countrymen. The same were responsible for the loss of several millions of pesos worth of crops and property.

Unwilling to be purged by these calamities, at the height of the typhoon, the PMA took the lead in organizing relief operations and medical missions alongside the major government agencies like the Department of Health and Department of Social Welfare and Development. I am also proud to share with you that many private entities and socio civic groups like the Philippine National Red Cross, the Philippine Coast Guard, United Laboratories, the major media networks (ABS CBN and GMA 7); our partners in the Allied Medical profession like the Philippine Nurses Association and the Philippine Pharmacists Association, have recognized the ascendancy of the PMA as the lead agency for the outreach efforts at that time. Nowhere in the 106 years history of the PMA has the Association managed to organize an activity of this magni-

tude. Since day one, the PMA has continued to deploy eight to ten teams a day consisting of hundreds of pharmacists, nurses and doctor volunteers.

Relief and cash donations started to pour into the National office from the component societies all over the country and from private citizens and groups from the Philippines and abroad.

There is also a continuing program called “Doctors on Boats” wherein a medical team on board rubber boats are deployed to areas still under floodwaters. We are now studying the prolonged health implications of this predicament and making the necessary recommendations and

actions to the local government units of the affected areas.

To date, the PMA and its partners have treated a conservative estimate of over 80,000 patients from 97 evacuation sites. We are likewise forming long term agreements with both the government agencies and private sector in forming response teams that will help alleviate the catastrophic effects of calamities and disasters.

The PMA has now come a long way. From being leaders to its members to being patriarchs of the community and society. Thank you good day.