

Report on the WHO WESTPAC Regional Conference - October 2019

by Dr. Maria Lourdes K. Otayza, MHA
Philippine Hospital Association

Reading the writings on the wall.

The five- day affair allowed me to get a global/ regional perspective on health and gave me the rare opportunity to reflect on the impact of the kind of service delivery the hospitals should plan to provide. There is so much space to develop and diversify our services. The daily grind keeps our attention tied up to answering and anticipating issues, and unravelling management knots that taking time to scan our environments and contexts can be overlooked. My deepest appreciation to the IHF and PHA for giving me this experience.

Eight month old Regional Director Dr. Takashi Kasai spoke in simple relatable terms: Asian Pacific population will double in ten years. To catch up on health issues, we need help in HOW, not just WHY. This was echoed by the Philippine Health Secretary when he said that we should “collectively imagine the future---health needs of older people, stateless people and refugees”.

The Singapore minister mentioned that we need to explore border arrangements . Pollution has such an impact and recognizes no borders. It was a revelation to me that new mosquitoes suppress local mosquitoes. Burma brought up mental health and suicide as a rising concern. Australia mentioned its sadness that the white paper did not seem to emphasise reproductive rights to decrease maternal mortality and morbidity, NCDs like cervical Cancer. This was refuted later by Dr. Kasai.

Malaysia spoke about shared prosperity across the region and policy coherence. “Without your success, I cannot be successful”. Looking into National Health Plans was suggested. If the white paper is used, then WPRO is successful. Commendations to the former Regional Director Dr. Shin, were also given.

A Special Report on Polio was delivered by Dr. Huang Tran.

DPM Dr. Yu discussed the budget. I had the privilege of being introduced to him by a common friend. He could potentially speak at the PHA Convention too.

Food Marketing was discussed: sugar taxes, healthy school food cafeterias and Australia's National Obesity Strategy, including TV advertisement prohibitions

A video of Dr. Atsuhiko Seike on Ageing and Health was compelling. The thought occurred that the Phil. Hospital Association could benefit from speakers of his ilk so that our country could anticipate this health issue better. Saku City, Japan or some other places mentioned could be considered for study tours. Emphasis on the mindset of sustaining lifelong employability , involves social inclusion, housing, transport and other infrastructure issues. Whole of government leadership and support and community involvement were oft-repeated principles. Other concepts were co-location of child and elderly care centers, lifelong learning on health & wellness, Singapore's yearly consultations to age well, team-based clinical management, extended use of Medisafe, etc. Vietnam contributed training workshops on integrating care of the elderly, dementia.

Other topics were also discussed relating to maternal and child health, climate change and so on which can be gleaned from the website.

A USB with regional data and other power point presentations and videos was provided which we can use for reference. Physical logistics, venue and meals for the activity were appropriate, if a little too healthy (no sugared drinks). The activity exercises (dancing) were well received. I had to miss the socials unfortunately because I was unwell.

Again, my sincerest gratitude and appreciation to the IHF and PHA for allowing me to enjoy this activity. I look forward to similar opportunities in the future.

Dr. Maria Lourdes K. Otayza MD, MHA, CESO V, AF-ACHSM is a multi-awarded medical practitioner based in the Philippines. She is most notable for being a recipient of the prestigious Gawad Career Executive Services (CES) Award from the Office of the President in 2017.

She is currently the Medical Center Chief II of Mariano Marcos Memorial Hospital and Medical Center, Chairman of Region 1 Health Research and Development Consortium (R1HRDC), Chairman of the Philippine National Health Research System- Research Agenda Committee (PNHRS-RAC) and Vice President for Luzon of the Philippine Hospital Association.