

# IHF BULLETIN



## INTERVIEW WITH HUBERTO LAPUZ

President, Philippine Hospital Association

**L.E.A.P.** - the acronym for Lead, Enable, Assist and Protect. LEAP is a powerful word that encapsulates the brand that propels the leadership and general membership of the Philippine Hospital Association (PHA) as it navigates the wide universe of healthcare.

The PHA is a 70-year old organization of healthcare providers from the government and private sectors in the 7,107 islands of the Philippines. It is composed of nearly 2,000 hospitals. A not for profit and non-stock entity, its views and voices are much sought after and enjoy the recognition of the various agencies of the government as well as the lawmaking bodies of the land from both the Congress and the Senate.

At the moment, in its Platinum Year, I sit as the organization's 13th President. Certainly, it gives me much pride to be part of the important page in the history book of the organization.



## KEY CHALLENGES FOR SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE PHILIPPINES

With the steady increase in worldwide population, the Philippines is not an exception. It hit the 100 million mark in 2014 and now, 5 years after, it stands at close to 110 million.

Healthcare service delivery poses a great burden and challenge for everyone. There were many responses developed by the government agencies, mainly the Department of Health. However, the significant one which was just very recent is the passing into law of the Universal Healthcare Act. Expectations in the surge of hospital clients of up to twice or thrice the normal volume can be expected and therefore will definitely be a game-changer for existing healthcare facilities and the inadequate number of medical professionals.

**"While there are other key challenges, the UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE ACT is presently the main area of concern of the healthcare system in our country."**

## KEY CHALLENGES IN HEALTHCARE ON THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

As it is, everyone has to live, cope and adapt to survive. Diverse situations in different parts of the globe, i.e. political, economic, social, technological and other factors have a varying degree of impacts. I regard environmental factors as a primary concern that will have significant impacts on healthcare globally. Demands on healthcare increase in direct relation to the increase in the world population. I foresee that there will be a scramble for the available healthcare professionals which can cause some gaps, especially in underdeveloped and developing countries. Before it can satisfactorily be mitigated, large scale conflicts within the populace of the affected areas may arise which then will impact the security and well being of concerned healthcare professionals.



## THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT'S HEALTHCARE STRUCTURE

The Philippine's Department of Health (DOH) holds the over-all technical authority on health. It is the country's national health policy-maker and regulatory institution. It is mandated to develop national plans, technical standards, and guidelines on health. Aside from being the regulator of all health services and products, the DOH is the provider of special tertiary health care services and technical assistance to health providers and stakeholders.

A significant DOH agency supports the attainment of its mandate to take good care of the healthcare of the population. The National Health Insurance Program was established and created the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PHIC) to provide health insurance coverage and ensure affordable, acceptable, available and accessible health care services for all citizens of the Philippines. It serves as the means for the healthy to help pay for the care of the sick and for those who can afford medical care to subsidize those who cannot. Through the years, it has expanded progressively and presently, with the passage early 2019 of the Universal Healthcare Law, now plays a significant role, along with the Local Government Units (province-wide and city-wide), in providing accessible, affordable and worry-free healthcare for the entire population.

The Universal Healthcare Act is a game-changer for the Philippines. It aims to introduce a systemic approach and clear delineation of the roles of key agencies and stakeholders towards better performance in the health system. As is an objective common to all countries, it shall guarantee everyone to equitable access to quality and affordable healthcare goods and services and protection against financial risk. Financing shall be sourced through a pooling of funds from certain taxes and annual appropriations to select government agencies including the govt subsidies to the DOH and PHIC. While there was a lot of huffing and puffing in the drawing of the Implementing Rules and Regulations, I have all the while encouraged our hospital members to keep an open mind, to be ready and prepared and to give it a chance. It will not be perfect at the start but the PHA should be there to coordinate and proactively participate in the monitoring, review and adjustments that will be needed.

## EVOLUTION OF THE IHF IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

The IHF will definitely stay relevant to its members in the years to come. Aside from doing the things it is doing now, it must continue to be responsive to the needs of its members. It must continue to build itself as the standard and source of inspiration for its members. In this digital age, the linkage and bond by IHF with its members must and should become stronger as the years go by to the extent that a sizable number of its members shall be actively interacting and exchanging communications regularly. The spirit of professional brotherhood among members must permeate and be encouraged by the IHF who shall provide opportunities for that to happen. It is easy to imagine now how and what IHF will be. However, beyond 10 years, beyond 20, beyond 30, who knows?

## EXPECTATIONS FROM AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE IHF

The Philippine Hospital Association has always been a staunch supporter of the aims of the IHF. It has so far sent delegations to its events, disseminated IHF's publications to the PHA general membership by posts in the website, volunteered to represent the IHF in various fora held in the Philippines, echoed IHF messages to the membership through email blasts, responded and reacted if and when requested.

The PHA holds in great regard its having gained a seat in the IHF's Governing Council. The seat opens lots of opportunities to give and take. It is with great appreciation that interactions and ideas formed therein redound to the benefit of the communities we are sworn to serve. The PHA's leadership has great expectations that IHF shall be able to fulfill the organization's expectations of being a wellspring of knowledge and wisdom.

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## ABOUT THE PHILIPPINE HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

The Philippine Hospital Association has always been guided by its mission statement, Lead, Enable, Assist and Protect (LEAP) hospitals towards quality service.

With the ever-increasing demands for participation and involvement of the PHA in the various activities and concerns of the concerned government agencies and other Non-Government Organizations., the need for more empowerment of its PHA Chapters nation-wide have become a necessity. This, to better cope and awaken the voice of the silent majority, especially on legislative issues affecting healthcare operation.

For the ensuing year, the PHA intends to establish a new Committee whose function shall be to tango to the sound of the soon to be implemented Universal Healthcare Act and ensure that no hospital members are unduly disadvantaged by any differences in interpretations in its implementations by the Local Government Units in the numerous provinces and cities in the Philippines.

Amendment of the by-laws of the organization that will help it to better adapt to the needs of the times shall likewise be a priority for next year.

Finally, it will continue its networking thrust by linking and continuing its active participation in the advocacies and activities of international health-related organizations.

## THE FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE: COLLABORATION

There has been a lot of talks already about the environment and as to how the uncaring attitude of most are already affecting a lot of things, i.e. extinction of species, real and imagined, resurrection of long-gone viruses/diseases, mutations and advent of new illnesses requiring new drugs, population explosion and the need for healthcare to cope in terms of facilities and trained professional staff and so on. I will not delve on them now as it will require several chapters on their dissertations.

Nonetheless, I have just made mention of them, that coming from our shores of small islands, 7,107 in all, we have apprehensions about the unchartered future. As our respective organizations celebrate their milestone this year and prepare for the attainment of their centennial or 100th year celebration, i.e. the PHA, at 70 years and the IHF at 90th year this year, I can only venture to offer my simple proposal, for everyone to huddle together and be united more than ever in attaining the delivery of care objectives and purposes of our respective organization, so that we can be ready, we can be prepared and we can be strong in facing the uncertainties of the future.

Technological advances are upon all of us and for that matter, the IHF can take the lead in seeing to it that all its members are updated on a timely basis with technological matters that will be of consequence as they chart their way into the uncertainties of tomorrow.

I believe that the IHF can be the catalyst that will help strengthen the bond between us members and eventually attain a borderless network of healthcare institutions sharing the same goal of contributing to the attainment of the health-related sustainable development goals.