

Speech of the Vice President Jejomar Binay, read by Former-DOH Sec. Esperanza A. Icasas Cabral

Thank you very much. Good morning friends. Please let me extend the gratefulness of the Vice President to be with you on your 30th anniversary and his profound and profuse apologies for not being able to join you personally. This has turned out to be sort of a bad-hair day for the Vice President. Nevertheless, he wanted to be here and has prepared a speech that he would like me to read. I, on the other hand, am pleased to represent him and would like to extend my known congratulations and best wishes to all of you this morning.

The Hon. Mario Montejo, the Hon. Enrique Ona, the Hon. Angelo Palmones, Dr. Jimmy Montoya, Dr. Bernadette Ramirez, officers and members of the governing Council of the PCHRD, fellow workers in government, research and development, distinguished guests and friends, ladies and gentlemen, as a civil servant I am not intimately familiar with the intricacies of the practice of medicine, but my years of service have blessed me with the modest perspective of the social impact of health programs on the true stakeholders of our country, our citizens.

Early this month, the British Health Journal *The Lancet* published several articles on China's health care system. One article that caught my eye took a close look at the connection between the urbanization and health care system in China. The article concluded that urbanization is a double-edged sword that presents both challenges and opportunities to improve the health care system of a country. More importantly, it highlighted the importance of innovative health policies and research in order to address the health challenges and maximize the benefits that accompany rapid urbanization.

PCHRD's development of a registry to track health researches and clinical trials in the country is a confident step in the right direction. This program is commendable in light of the limitations that hamper the Philippine health system. With the growing propagation and evolution of information and communication technology in the country we are one of the most technologically literate people in the region. This potent instrument provides invaluable support to your lofty and timely aims, and the registry, itself, shall be rich source of expert knowledge. The Philippine Health

Registry that you have endeavoured to create is a publicly accessible database for all health researches and clinical trials being conducted in the country. The registry allows the researchers, themselves, to register and update their information, making the details available even before the start of actual work and providing details as the studies progress. This ensures equal opportunity for everyone who wants to participate in clinical trials and help the companies recruit the most number of patients in a shorter period of time.

This project is timely because this enables researchers, funding agencies, policy makers and planners to track the various health research efforts that are being undertaken. Certainly, duplication of research can be avoided. The projects that are launched can enjoy increased support from both funders and medical experts. In the end, the excellence and sophistication of these pursuits is raised even higher and the ultimate beneficiaries, the public, are better attended to.

On a parallel plain, the government sees the wisdom behind the habitual review of ongoing and pipeline project. By examining and recalibrating all that is funded by taxpayers' money, the nation is assured that whatever we execute shall match the needs of both the populace and of the times. In dissecting all that we have committed to we are also able to create environments and opportunities for funding expertise from the private sector to provide momentum. Within the health and services sphere, we can rationalize investments in science and technology and entice the private sector to more aggressively support and implement projects that are in consonance with health, science and technology.

Perhaps, my previous experience as a local executive may help illustrate the point. When I was appointed Mayor of Makati in 1986, it was our general policy to ensure that a just portion of the city's resources would be directed to addressing the needs of its lower income residents. At the time, healthcare was identified as an urgent and pressing concern, as the poorer residents had no access to quality health services. The existing health facilities of the municipality bordered on obsolete and were grossly inadequate to service the target population.

On the fiscal front, we have already sealed the gaps in our operational and capital expenditures. So securing the funding needed for the program was not the primary

caused of anxiety. However, money is only a part of the equation. We needed to secure expert knowledge to ensure that the first breath the program took would not be its last. The local government initiated talks with the private sector, tapping Makati-based NGO's to provide the much needed technical and manpower support for the health care. The partnership proved both prudent and successful. It allowed the local government to allocate more resources to upgrading to city health facilities, building new health centers, and even a tertiary hospital.

The city government of Makati also entered a partnership with the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation to expand the health coverage and meet the evolving medical needs of a growing population. The program beneficiaries are classified as medically indigent. In simplest terms, they do not have the ordinary means to meet the medical needs of their families. However, they are not recipients of aid, but participants in the process, itself. In the same way the local government involved the private sector and NGOs, the beneficiaries participated in a program through the paying service fees based on their income classification. The amounts involved are merely token sums, but we deemed it crucial that in bringing health to the needy, the beneficiaries would not fall into the trap on complete dependence on government. In showing them that the program's success depended on their participation, however modest, they will gain a sense of ownership and exert the care and concern of a co-owner. In this way, each one was both beneficiary and stakeholder, and the longevity of our health programs in Makati has proven this wisdom right.

My friends, government's mission is to create and maintain an environment where everyone has access to decent opportunities. In this enterprise, private sector participation is to be encouraged rather than excluded. The model is not new and scores of case studies worldwide demonstrate that this approach, properly implemented, works.

Whereas the city once worried about diseases and potential epidemics, it is now blessed with a sound state of general health. Preventive medicine has eclipsed treatment as the mainstream activity and this has reduced strain on hospitals and clinics within its geographical boundaries. Constant dialogue with the beneficiaries is also a cornerstone of such partnership. In the case of Makati, the *Ugnayan sa Barangay* dialogues provide the Mayor and key officials with honest and prompt

feedback from residents regarding government programs and services. This information is of immense help in fine tuning policies, implementation and funding for the benefit of the citizenry.

As you deservedly celebrate three decades of service to the nation, I encourage all of you to see how similar models can be applied to your arena. The successful societies of our times have more than just vast stores of knowledge or intellectual capital. They are nations able to take research, communicate it eloquently to the public and spur cohesive synergies to benefit the life of the ordinary man. Clearly, research has great social and commercial value to us and to the rest of the world.

As the rest of the international communities contribute their work to the volume of medical history, it is your hand that permits our crucial and seminal contributions to fill our own chapters.

On this vast and promising stage, PCHRD's voice may not always rise above the din. Its moving performance may escape the spotlight. But never lose sight of your profound and key role. Your organization is like a critical director or a masterful conductor. You labor in silence, but your hand guides the entire community of experts so that their voices break out in song for the world to hear and the richness expertise's harmony shall bring great relief to those who must battle illness.

Congratulations on your 30th anniversary. I have the firmest faith that your next three decades shall encounter nothing but success. Thank you very much! Mabuhay tayong lahat!