

WHO discusses reforms to meet global challenges on health

“In the last week of February, there was a meeting of the member states of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva about WHO reforms on programs and priority setting,” announced Dr. Bernadette Ramirez, scientist of Research and Training in Tropical Diseases of the WHO, at the 30th anniversary celebration of the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development of the Department of Science and Technology (PCHRD-DOST).

The meeting aimed to create smart, rational and objective reforms which will impact the WHO general program of work and budget for 2014–2015. Member states tackled topics on financing, governance and priority-setting. Dr. Ramirez said, *“WHO is in the process of financial implementation prioritization. That means, the global efforts and money have to be translated to better health and the goal is for health protection for the entire world.”*

PCHRD Scholars Society convention highlights 21st century skills for researchers



Dr. Montoya leads the oath taking of the PCHRD scholars' new set of officials.

The Philippine Council for Health Research and Development (PCHRD) Scholars Society (PSS) held its first convention with the theme “21st Century Skills for Researchers” at the Hyatt Hotel and Casino Manila on 20 March 2012.

“21st century skills” refer to the growing global framework that redefines the goals of education, to transform how learning is practiced, and to expand the range of measures in students’ achievement to meet the new demands of the 21st Century.

Dr. Josefina Tuazon, former Dean of the College of Nursing, University of the Philippines Manila (UPM) and President of PSS said “21st century skills” revolved around three major skills: life and career, learning and innovation, and information and communication technology (ICT). *“In order to be*

productive in the 21st century, we should have the ability to quickly learn from the core of knowledge, master the essentials of innovation and technology to adapt to the increasingly information-driven and technologically-powered society. As researchers, we don't just need statistics we need to have skills on ethical research, skills on technical writing and literacy on ICT. Researches should be publishable and can contribute to new knowledge, and most importantly, have impact to the community.”

In the plenary sessions, the following topics were discussed: Influencing policies and practices in health research by Dr. Eva



Dr. Bernadette Ramirez of WHO discusses reforms to meet global challenges in health

She added, *“It was a crucial and pivotal meeting. It was important for them to discuss which direction WHO and the rest of member states are going in terms of addressing what priorities to address.”*

Among the issues discussed in the meeting are the prioritization of innovation through regional innovation networks such as the ASEAN Network for Drug, Diagnostics, and Vaccines Innovation (ASEAN-NDI) and African Network for Drugs and Diagnostics Innovation (ANDI) and reform on WHO’s accountability in terms of measurable impact of WHO-funded projects, the way WHO uses

its financial resources, and its overall performance as an organization.

Dr. Ramirez revealed, *“The meeting was crucial because it is important for WHO and its 144 member states to understand that choices have to be made,”* and added, *“This is WHO preparing the norms and standards where all member countries can benefit.”* 🔄 (Richmond Q. Acosta)

Healthy lifestyle leads to healthy aging – WHO

“Good health must lie at the core of any successful response to ageing. If we can ensure that people are living healthier as well as longer lives, the opportunities will be greater and the costs to society less. Overwhelmingly the health challenges in older age are the consequences of non-communicable disease. We need to develop health systems which can provide the chronic care that these diseases and their risk factors require,” said Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) at the celebration of the World Health Day on April 7 in Geneva, Switzerland.

Older people are more prone to disabilities. WHO’s Global Burden of Disease of 2004 showed that the prevalence of disability increases with age and more than 46% of people aged 60 years and over have disabilities.

For older adults in high-income countries, the biggest causes of burden of disease are, in order of importance, ischaemic heart disease, visual disorders, dementia, cancers and stroke. For low- and middle-income countries, the biggest causes of burden of disease are ischaemic heart disease, stroke, visual disorders, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Because of these statistics, WHO identified a set of evidence-based actions to ease the burden on health brought by ageing population. These include promoting good health and healthy behaviours at all ages to help prevent or delay the development of chronic diseases; minimizing the consequences of chronic disease through early detection and quality care; creating physical and social environments that foster the health participation of older people; and reinventing ageing by changing social attitudes to encourage the participation of older people in the society.

“Older people already make a significant contribution to society, whether it is through the formal or informal workforce. We can foster this contribution by helping them maintain good health by breaking down the many barriers that prevent their ongoing participation in society,” stressed Dr. Chan. 🔄 (Rachel Ann Doreen D. Nadal)

Dr. Montoya also emphasized the importance of partnership and collaboration, *“We are happy to work with you, with your intelligence, energy, sense of purpose and commitment - the country needs what you have to offer now, more than ever,”* stressed Dr. Montoya.

The PSS was organized in 2007 to help PCHRD strengthen its effort to sustain an enabling environment for health research and provide avenue for health research information exchange among PCHRD scholars. 🔄 (Edmon B. Agron)



PCHRD passes second surveillance audit for ISO 9001:2008 certification

For any organization, be it a private company or a government agency, an aggressive quality management system is strategically important in order for the organization to function smoothly and provide excellent services to its clients.

Since 2009, the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development of the Department of Science and Technology (PCHRD-DOST) has undergone the most rigorous transformation in all of its processes to obtain an ISO 9001:2008 certification. In February 29, 2012, the PCHRD renewed its certification by passing the second surveillance audit of the Certification International Philippines Inc (CIPI).

Dr. Jaime C. Montoya, Executive Director of PCHRD, proudly broke the news at the 30th anniversary of the Council last March 16, 2012 at the Makati Shangri-la. He said, *“It is with pride that I share with you this piece of good news. The Council has recently moved a step forward by passing the second surveillance audit for ISO certification 9001:2008.”*

Passing the surveillance audit of CIPI is a rigorous and often an extraordinary achievement for many organizations, especially for government agencies. Thus, many try to have only one or two of their processes undergo the ISO certification at a time. But PCHRD have taken the whole process to a new height, by having its core processes certified. The certification covered Quality Management System (QMS) processes on research management and development, institution development, research communication and utilization, and finance and administrative functions.

Dr. Montoya shared, *“Should I say, in particular, that they are not just certifying just one process. They are actually certifying the whole Council, which is a very unique achievement for a government agency like us, in terms of ISO certification!”* 🔄 (Richmond Q. Acosta)



PCHRD turns 30, Health Research for Development (HR4D) as central theme

The theme “HR4D” or “Health Research for Development” was fittingly chosen as the rallying call of the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development of the Department of Science and Technology (PCHRD-DOST) in its celebration of its 30th year of service as the lead national agency in coordinating and monitoring health research initiatives in the Philippines last March 16, 2012 at the Makati Shangri La Hotel, Makati City.

Dr. Jaime C. Montoya, Executive Director of PCHRD-DOST, proudly announced, *“The theme HR4D or ‘Health Research for Development’ reflects our strong commitment and support to research and innovation for health, equity and development.”*

With the vision to be the lead council that creates and sustains an enabling environment for health research in the Philippines, indeed, PCHRD has

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MSU-IIT is Country's 1st Tuklas Lunas Center

During its 30th anniversary last 16 March 2012, the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development of the Department of Science and Technology (PCHRD-DOST) awarded the Mindanao State University–Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT) as the first Tuklas Lunas Center under the Council’s Natural Substance Research Program.

solutions to the countries’ medical needs. Through the program, PCHRD aims to establish a Drug Discovery Database which will store information on all researches conducted on natural products. This will serve as a tool in guiding researchers as to which species have the potential for further studies leading to the discovery of new drugs. Alongside the development of the database, three Tuklas Lunas Centers will be set up in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

For Mindanao, the PCHRD-NSRC Selection Board chose MSU-IIT to host the DOST-DOST-PCHRD, in a bid to provide

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162 to 52 Coalition: Accelerating maternal health development through local health system development

Last April 20, 2012, the 162 to 52 Health Summit themed, “Accelerating Impact on Maternal and Child Health through Local Health System Development,” gathered various stakeholders from government, academe, profit and non-profit sectors to boost multi-sectoral efforts in addressing maternal and health challenges of the country.

The National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) recorded 162 maternal deaths out of 100,000 live births in 2010. It is estimated that 11 mothers die every day due to childbirth and pregnancy-related complications. “Maternal deaths impact infant and child mortality rates because when a low-income mother dies, a child is pushed into life of difficulty. According to the World Health organization (WHO), children who are left without mothers are three to ten times more at risk of dying,” said Mr. Daniel Zuellig of the Zuellig Family Foundation.

Project MAMA of Minalabac, Cam Sur exemplifies responsive leadership for maternal health

“Responsive health leadership is the key to improve community involvement on local health programs and services,” said Mr. Ernesto D. Garilao, Zuellig Family Foundation President in the 162 to 52 Health Summit: Accelerating Impact on Maternal and Child Health through Local Health System Development last April 20, 2012.

True enough, the Project MAMA or Maternal Assistance Monitoring Action implemented by the local government unit (LGU) of Minalabac, Camarines Sur exemplifies how responsive leadership and public-private partnership can improve the maternal health situation of a municipality.

Hon. Leovigildo Basmayor, Mayor of Minalabac proudly announced the implementation of Municipal Ordinance No. 121-2011, regulating the practices of trained birth attendants and all health personnel working on motherhood/maternal and child health care. He said, “This is how we decrease the number of maternal deaths. We subject pregnant women under the law but we make sure they understand that it is for better health outcomes.” Mayor Basmayor added, “The ordinance is not a scheme for profit.

Today, 84 percent of pregnant women deliver in birthing homes compared to 82 percent birth deliveries at home in 2010. We obliged the mothers to deliver in birthing homes because they will be taken cared by skilled health personnel, decreasing the risk of

“The adjusted maternal mortality ratio of 162 per 100,000 live births is far from the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target of 52 deaths per 100,000 live births,” Health Secretary Enrique Ona said. With only three years left for the country to attain the MDGs by 2015, the 162 to 52 goal calls for drastic interventions. “We need local government to drive change, private sector to help government in its undertakings, and civil society organizations to sustain the efforts and deliver it to the grassroots,” said Mr. Zuellig.

In response, the Department of Health (DOH) spearheaded the formation of the multi-sectoral group called “162 to 52 Coalition.”

The 162 to 52 Coalition is envisioned to be a catalyst



mortality both for the mother and child.”

The municipal ordinance allowed Project MAMA to achieve its goal of eradicating causes of maternal mortality through the following activities: 1) periodical monitoring of the health conditions of mothers from the onset of pregnancy through childbirth and post-partum period; 2) administration of medical and nutritional support through the aid of doctors, midwives and trained volunteers; 3) information dissemination about maternal health via media campaigns; 4) opening avenues of communication and providing transportation to facilitate immediate assistance in emergencies; and 5) capacity building of community members on importance of maternal health.

“In Project MAMA, local community members are not only taught about the health programs available, they are also encouraged to take part in planning appropriate health programs. We believe empowerment of locals ensures sustainability of health gains,” explained Mayor Basmayor.

Aside from Project MAMA, Minalabac has three other projects on maternal health: Preggy Savers Club – Buntis Baby Bank Project which requires all pregnant women to save funds prior to delivery; Maternal Breastfeeding Program which obligates mothers to feed their children with their breast milk from six months onwards; and Health Promotion and Advocacy which tackles responsible parenthood. (Ana Ciaren P. Hipolito)

for strategic, targeted and innovative public-private partnerships for the attainment of better maternal indicators working within three major components: 1) leadership - responsive local government units and support groups; 2) demand side - better health seeking behavior of the population; and 3) supply side – accessible and affordable services, facilities, personnel, essential medicines and commodities.

“The initiative provides opportunities and encourages private and civil society organizations to proactively contribute to needed interventions under one framework for action,” said Mr. Zuellig.

The 162 to 52 Summit was organized to provide the non-profit sector and LGUs a platform to establish their commitment to improve maternal and child health through public-private partnership at the local government level.

“Solving the maternal mortality problem requires the expertise and skills of both the public and private sectors,” Sec. Ona said. (Ana Ciaren P. Hipolito)

LGUs crucial in achieving MDG5, improving maternal health by 2015 – Pres. Aquino

“With just three years left, the Philippines is behind the target maternal mortality ratio. All sectors, both in the private and public fields, from government partners and civil society, can unite to attain MDG 5,” said President Benigno S. Aquino III in his message delivered by Health Secretary Enrique Ona during the 162 to 52 Summit: Accelerating Impact on Maternal and Child Health through Local Health System Development at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) last April 20, 2012.

The President emphasized the role of local government units (LGUs) in taking the lead towards the attainment of Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 5 or the reduction of maternal mortality ratio from 162 to 52 per 100,000 live births by 2015.

“The government has spent 15 million pesos for the improvement and construction of health facilities, including health centers with operating rooms, nationwide, to prevent maternal deaths. The Department of Health (DOH) hired more than 20,000 nurses and 7,000 midwives to serve the far-flung areas,” reported Secretary Ona. However, the President still recognized the need to accelerate improvement of the maternal and infant health through strategic and substantive coalition between the LGUs and profit and non-profit sectors. “We need more equipment, we need more medicines, we need more

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Academe seeks government, industries' support for natural products R&D

“Research on herbal medicine is not performed across the country. Mostly researches are concentrated in NCR,” reported Dr. Maribel G. Nonato, Professor at the University of Sto. Tomas (UST) during the second roundtable discussion on Philippine Herbal Industry-Standards and Regulatory Settings last March 19, 2012 at the Traders Hotel, Pasay City.

According to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), only 57 private universities and 38 state universities and colleges (SUCs) nationwide are shortlisted as Centers of Excellence (COEs) and Centers of Development (CODs) due to their demonstrated level of high standard along the areas of instruction, research and extension. However, Dr. Nonato reported, “Only 23.7 percent of the universities across the country conduct research on natural products. This low figure may be due to insufficient funding support, challenge in isolation and identification of compounds, and lengthy time duration in conducting research.”

Dr. Nonato admitted that knowledge generated from research often ends up in library spaces because the academic sector does not know how to market their discoveries. The academe's ignorance in marketing their generated knowledge impedes the progress of the herbal products industry. “Most universities do not have intention to go out and market what they discovered in research. The lack of knowledge on how to market and talk to the industry sector is the

reservation of those in the academe,” said Dr. Nonato. She added, “Not all universities are prepared to market their discoveries because there's no intellectual property (IP) protection within the university system.”

Dr. Nonato assured that the academic sector can execute the R&D work. However, she said that standardization and regulation of policies are needed for the conduct of herbal research in the academe, capacity building of all academic sectors



nationwide, IP protection and government and private sector support.

“Academic institutions have the knowledge, expertise and people for the conduct of R&D. The government has the funding while the natural products industry sector has the know-how in marketing. If we work together, we can move our herbal industry forward,” concluded Dr. Nonato. (Ana Ciaren P. Hipolito)

Study recommends rehabilitation instead of jail time for drug offenders

The study entitled “Drug-Defined Crimes among inmates of a city jail in Eastern Visayas, Philippines” was praised for challenging existing policies on drug-use and drug-defined crimes at the recently concluded 1st General Assembly and Research Forum of the Eastern Visayas Health Research and Development Consortium (EVHRDC), held at Tacloban City last March 8, 2012.

The research, done by a team led by Dr. Teresita M. Cajano, with the support of the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development of the Department of Science and Technology (PCHRD – DOST), insisted that drug-use and offenses made to sustain the drug addiction of the inmates should not be seen as crimes but as signs of a person's growing problem of drug dependency. Therefore, a person who has been proven of taking illicit drugs or of doing crimes in order to support the addiction should be placed in a rehabilitation center and not in jail. The study insists, “If the drug possession (Section 11) and drug sale (Section 5) are done because of her/his drug dependency, as supported by a positive drug test and the result of a drug dependency examination conducted by a DOH-accredited physician, s/he should be considered a medical case rather than a criminal case and should undergo drug treatment and rehabilitation instead of incarceration.”

The study aims to determine the prevalence of drug-defined crimes among the inmates of a city

jail in Eastern Visayas, the socio-demographic background of these offenders and the factors associated with their crimes. Albeit, the information gathered by the study revealed interesting information about the inmates accused of drug-related crimes, what really moved the audience at the event was the study's recommendation to admit drug offenders to rehabilitation centers instead of putting them in jail.

Results of the study reveal that many of the inmates started taking drugs at a young age and progresses as the person gets older. This is the same with alcoholism, which is considered as a medical case. Therefore, drug use and offenses done to support the dependency should be taken as a medical case and not as a crime as well.

Dr. Cajano made a bold move to recommend the amendment of the Section 15 of the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002 (RA 9165) that states that “a person apprehended or arrested, who is found to be positive for use of any dangerous drug, after a confirmatory test, shall be imposed a penalty.”

Dr. Antonio E. Lim, Jr, Dean of the St. Scholastica's College in Tacloban City, congratulated Dr. Cajano and praised the research's potential to change an existing law in the country. He said, “The study looks just like other surveys, but its conclusion is bold enough to push for amendment of a policy in the Congress. Now, this is what we call high impact research!” (Richmond Q. Acosta)

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Bridging the gaps in infectious disease research

“Research gaps are unmet needs in your research. You have to identify what is really needed in the field and have an open mind,” explained Dr. Raul V. Destura, Director of the Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology of the National Institutes of Health (IMBB-NIH) in a lecture organized by the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development (PCHRD) last March 01, 2012.

“There are gaps in infectious diseases research that need to be identified and addressed, especially in these three diseases – dengue, tuberculosis and influenza,” said Dr. Destura.

In the case of dengue, it is one of the most significant arthropod-borne viral diseases in the world, causing 50-100 million cases of dengue fever per year. Currently, no vaccines or drugs are available to treat or prevent dengue infection.

According to Dr. Destura, “There is a need for early case confirmation and identification of cases at risk, standardize validation of treatment algorithms, development of vaccines to prevent dengue

Country's TB program strategy, targets the attainment of the MDGs

“The increase in prevalence of tuberculosis has been due to the low priority accorded to anti-tuberculosis activities by many countries. The unavailability of anti-TB drugs, insufficient laboratory networking, poor health infrastructures, as well as a lack of trained health personnel, have also contributed to the rise in the incidence of the diseases,” according to Dr. Rosalind G. Vianzon, National TB Program (NTP) Manager from the National Center for Disease Prevention and Control (NCDPC) of the Department of Health (DOH).

The NTP is the government's commitment to address the TB problem in the country and its main strategy is to use the Directly-Observed Treatment Short-course (DOTS) to detect and cure TB patients.

Significant progress was recorded since the Philippines adopted the DOTS strategy in 1996. At the end of 2002-2003, all public health centers were able to deliver DOTS services.

In 2007, the treatment success of TB was able to reach above 85% and is expected to be sustained in the next years. The cure rate was posted at 82% in 2007 but it is likely to increase at 85% by 2015.

The case detection rate for new smear positives has reached the international target of 70% as early as 2004 and has been sustained up to the present.

Dr. Vianzon reported that the case detection rate of all forms of TB seemed to be weak and mostly reaching below 70%. That is why the call to increase case detection to 70% or at least 85% is deemed

infection and an outbreak prediction technology.”

Tuberculosis (TB), on the other hand, is caused by bacteria (*Mycobacterium tuberculosis*) that most often affect the lungs. In 2010, there were 8.8 million incident cases of TB, 1.1 million deaths from TB among HIV-negative people and an additional 0.35 million deaths from HIV-associated TB.

However, Dr. Destura reported that new findings showed that the absolute number of TB cases has been falling since 2006 and estimates of the number of deaths from TB each year has decreased.

“To stop the spread of TB globally, the world needs new TB drugs that will shorten treatment and be effective against susceptible and resistant strains. There is a need for new vaccine that is both effective and safe for children, adolescents and adults, including people infected with HIV. Better TB diagnostics are needed too,” said Dr. Destura.

Meanwhile, Influenza is a viral infection that affects mainly the nose, throat, bronchi and, occasionally, lungs. In the Philippines, there is currently no existing database about influenza. Present data on influenza only includes basic information and infection rates

necessary.

“We are not just looking on all new forms of TB but merely considering all forms because epidemiologically, you cannot control a program if you will focus only on the highly infectious,” she said.

Dr. Vianzon mentioned that there are two key documents on TB research. One is the Philippine Plan of Action to Control TB (PhilPACT) 2012-2016 and the other is 2010 Tuberculosis Research Priority Agenda Setting.

The PhilPACT is the roadmap of the NTP and attuned with the health sector reform “*Kalusugan Pangkalahatan*” or KP. It is in line with TB global plans such as The Global Plan to Stop TB 2011-2015, Stop TB Partnership (technical arm of the international communities on TB control) and Regional Strategic Plan of Western Pacific.

The 2010 Tuberculosis Research Priority Agenda Setting meanwhile, is the research monograph of the NTP and was developed to support the R&D of NTP. This monograph was based on the 8-point strategy of NTP plan, with perspectives coming from both public and private sectors. The document was intended for doers, funders and implementers of research.

The 2010 Tuberculosis Research Priority Agenda Setting is published through a funding from the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development of the Department of Science and Technology (PCHRD-DOST). (Rachel Ann Doreen D. Nadal)

and little is available on epidemiology and drug-resistance.

Some of the identified gaps and needs in influenza research are the determinants of transmissibility which involves infectious dose studies; impact of intervention which involves community trial on the effect of medications which relieve symptoms; and vaccines and their use.

Sharing his guiding principles, Dr. Destura concluded, “We should all strive to actively participate in the national and global effort to alleviate diseases of poverty by building on existing local research strengths and growing international collaboration, providing excellence and innovation in the field of research, training health professional and sharing health knowledge.” (Rachel Ann Doreen D. Nadal)

LGUs crucial in ... from p2

trained and compassionate, committed people to man our hospitals. The more people manning our health facilities means more lives will be saved. Hopefully, through the 162 to 52 Coalition, we can attain better maternal indicators,” said Sec. Ona.

The Department of Health (DOH) spearheads the 162 to 52 Coalition, a multisectoral organization which focuses efforts on accelerating developments in maternal and child health.

“This coalition needs to prosper for us to achieve MDG 5 and reduce maternal mortality. The bottom line, this is not just about saving the lives of people today, we are also saving the lives of our future generation,” the President stressed. (Ana Ciaren P. Hipolito)

COMBI: Addressing dengue ... from p4

Regrettably, an informed and educated individual is not necessarily a behaviorally responsive individual,” PAHO revealed.

COMBI begins with identification of behavioral objectives, followed by a Situational Market Analysis (SMA) of factors influencing the attainment of the overall goal and the behavioral goal. SMA involves listening to people and learning about their perceptions and obstacles to the proposed behavior.

For integrated communication actions, PAHO formulated a COMBI guidelines which include: advocacy for healthy behavior in the business sector; social mobilization or participatory research; publicity or appropriate advertising through media; advocacy to school children, volunteers, social development workers and point-of-service promotion by emphasizing easily accessible or readily available vector control measures and other treatments against dengue.

With COMBI, health practitioners, implementers, and stakeholders will be guided in conceptualization, implementation, and monitoring of communication actions. It also becomes a platform for increased community participation towards adoption of the identified human behaviors necessary in the elimination and control of dengue in the community. (Edmon B. Agron)

Dengue Summit prepares officials and LGUs versus dengue in 2012

“Winning the war against dengue entails victories on numerous fronts around the country” said Department of Health (DOH) Secretary Enrique Ona during the Dengue Summit held at Heritage Hotel, Manila on 13 April 2012. “That is why we gather you all here to share accomplishments, best practices, challenges and future commitments to our fight against the disease.”

With the theme, “*Aksiyon Barangay Kontra Dengue, Pagtibayin*” the summit provided an opportunity for stakeholders to discuss plans and future strategies for the prevention and control of dengue in the country. It also highlighted updates on dengue clinical case management, vector control strategies, ongoing and future researches, and strategies in mobilizing the community against the disease.

“We do not want to see again our public hospitals being filled with dengue patients and hear increasing outbreaks reported everywhere,” said Secretary Ona. He challenged the national government agencies, non-government organizations and private sector to intensify collaborations and partnerships to implement a holistic and comprehensive dengue control plan for 2012.

Dengue vaccine may be available in 2014

“Dengue vaccine is now on its final stage of clinical development,” said Dr. Rosario Capeding, Head of the Dengue Study Group of the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine of the Department of Health (RITM-DOH) during the Dengue Summit at the Heritage Hotel, Manila on 13 April 2012.

Among several dengue vaccine candidates, only Sanofi Pasteur dengue vaccine entered Phase III clinical study which is the ultimate step in vaccine clinical development. “This is the final stage prior to its license approval for market distribution by regulatory authorities,” said Dr. Capeding.

At the moment, Phase III clinical studies are being conducted in Mexico, Colombia, Honduras, Puerto Rico, Peru, Vietnam, Singapore, Australia, Thailand and the Philippines to determine the vaccine's safety, immunogenicity and its capability to control the disease.

In the Philippines, the vaccine was already tested among different human age groups. “Initial data showed very satisfactory results in terms of safety profile and balance immune system response to the four dengue serotypes (serotype 1,2,3 and 4) among children, adolescents and adults tested,” said Dr. Capeding. “With this, we are hoping that the dengue vaccine will be available as early as 2014 to be introduced in countries with the highest dengue incidence like the Philippines,” she added.

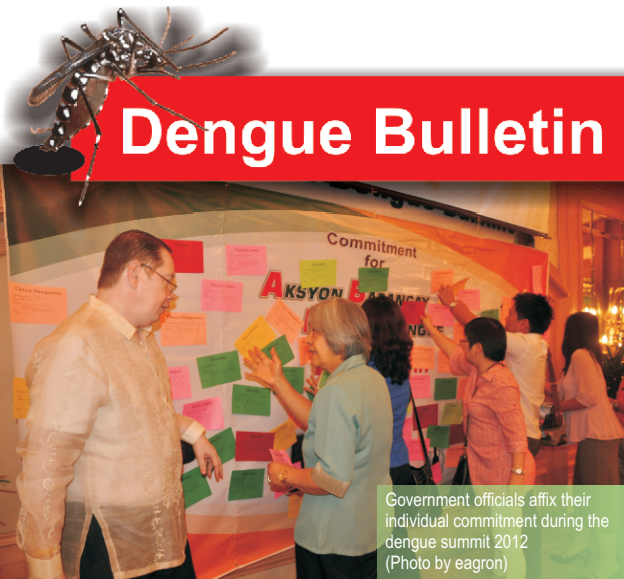
The leading dengue vaccine developers worldwide are Sanofi Pasteur, National Institutes of Health (NIH) of the United States of America, Merck, Inviragen, GlaxoSmithKline and Hawaii Biotech. (Edmon B. Agron)

He also encouraged the media to communicate and facilitate public information and education on dengue in the communities, and the local governments units (LGUs). “Local leaders should take the responsibility and spearhead clean-up drive activities. We should set ourselves as models in our community, by doing what we are advocating to prevent and control dengue.”

In 2010, more than 173,000 dengue cases were recorded, the worst outbreak in the

country for the past ten years. “Although we achieved considerable success last year where we reduced the cases to 27% compared to that in 2010, we can never be complacent. In about three months, with the onset of rainy season, we are anticipating increased number in dengue cases,” explained Secretary Ona.

He also encouraged everyone to be more proactive in the campaign against the disease. “To outdo our accomplishment last year, we have to be more creative this time and be more proactive. We should be focused. We must target the source of mosquito eggs in the hope of eradicating the root cause of



Dengue Bulletin

Government officials affix their individual commitment during the dengue summit 2012 (Photo by eagron)

dengue,” reiterated Secretary Ona.

Likewise, “We must strengthen our technical and logistical support to LGUs in implementing dengue control measures.” This includes disease surveillance, outbreak response, and research as key elements in ensuring full arsenal of strategies to combat dengue all year round.

Our target this year is to lower the incidence of dengue cases to less than 100,000. It seems a tall order for all of us but I believe if we work together, this can be achieved,” concluded Secretary Ona. (Edmon B. Agron)

Lower dengue cases recorded in first quarter of 2012 - DOH

As of March 2012, a total of 15,536 dengue cases was reported, 30 percent lower compared to the 22,200 cases recorded for the same period last year. “This is a result of our collaborative efforts,” said Secretary Ona. “But, of course, we can never be complacent. That is why, as early as April, we are conducting this Summit to gather all stakeholders and partners to share best practices and learn from their experiences. I hope before the rainy season starts, we will all be prepared to run the battle against dengue.”

As of March 2012, a total of 15,536 dengue cases was reported, 30 percent lower compared to the 22,200 cases recorded for the same period last year. “This is a result of our collaborative efforts,” said Secretary Ona. “But, of course, we can never be complacent. That is why, as early as April, we are conducting this Summit to gather all stakeholders and partners to share best practices and learn from their experiences. I hope before the rainy season starts, we will all be prepared to run the battle against dengue.”

The Health Secretary commended all dengue program partners and stakeholders and encouraged them to continue to support the DOH on its goal to eradicate dengue in the country. “We did our best last year, but we have to do more. We have to be more creative and more aggressive this time,” said Secretary Ona.

As of March 2012, a total of 15,536 dengue cases was reported, 30 percent lower compared to the 22,200 cases recorded for the same period last year.

In search of other possible solutions to the dengue problem, the DOH will also look into the use of information technology to facilitate fast reporting and immediate dengue outbreak response. “Aside from treating the dengue patients who enter the hospital, on the same day, we can inform the barangay health workers where the patients are living to conduct clean-up activities or fogging, if necessary, to prevent the breeding of dengue-causing mosquitoes.”

Secretary Ona also motivated barangay health workers to become dengue soldiers at the community level. “They should take responsibility and spearhead clean-up activities and information dissemination drives in the community. We have to be proactive not only for treatment and surveillance but also for early prevention because stopping dengue is in our hands,” concluded Secretary Ona. (Edmon B. Agron)

Dengue Bulletin

Dengue hospitalization now free for indigent patients

Hospitalization due to dengue is now free for indigent patients,” announced Department of Health (DOH) Secretary Enrique Ona during the Dengue Summit held at the Heritage Hotel, Manila on 13 April 2012.

“We are serious to achieve universal healthcare by extending PhilHealth coverage to all Filipinos belonging to the marginalized sector of the society,” said Secretary Ona. “This includes the 23 medical conditions covered by PhilHealth including dengue.”

Through the new case payment scheme, PhilHealth will cover hospital billing of up to Php8,000.00 for Dengue I and Php16,000.00 for Dengue II of all Sponsored Program members admitted in accredited government hospitals.

Sponsored Program members refer to the indigent families enrolled in the National Health Insurance Program (NHIP), subsidized by the local government units (LGUs), private companies and individuals or families listed under the National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction (NHTSPR) of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

“Of course, we don’t want anybody to get hospitalized,” said Secretary Ona. “That is why the huge chunk of our efforts is directed towards vector control to prevent the spread of the disease. But we constantly update and review case

COMBI: Addressing dengue by targeting human behavior


The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), a regional network of the World Health Organization (WHO), has formulated a new strategy called Communication for Behavioral Impact (COMBI) to address the global dengue problem.

COMBI is an integrated marketing communication approach aimed to encourage the community to adopt desirable behavior towards the attainment of health goals. WHO used this approach to address global health challenges such as the elimination of leprosy, control of tuberculosis, lymphatic filariasis and other non-communicable diseases.

COMBI integrates health education, information

management protocols and guidelines to respond to the increasing challenges brought about by treating numerous patients, especially for dengue.”

Aside from dengue, PhilHealth also covers the following medical conditions and surgical procedures for indigent patients:

Medical conditions: Pneumonia I – Php15,000.00; Pneumonia II – Php32,000.00; Essential hypertension – Php9,000.00; Cerebral Infarction – Php28,000.00; Cerebro-vascular accident with haemorrhage – Php38,000.00; Acute gastroenteritis – Php6,000.00; Asthma – Php9,000.00; Typhoid fever – Php14,000.00; Newborn care package in hospitals and lying-in clinics Php1,750.00. Surgical procedures: Radiotherapy - Php3,000.00; Hemodialysis - Php4,000.00; maternity care – Php8,000.00; normal spontaneous delivery package in level 1 hospitals – Php8,000.00; normal spontaneous delivery package in levels 2 to 4 hospitals – Php6,500.00; Caesarean section – Php19,000.00; Appendectomy – Php24,000.00; Cholecystectomy – Php31,000.00; Dilation and curettage – Php11,000.00; Thyroidectomy – Php31,000.00; Herniorrhaphy – Php21,000.00; Mastectomy – Php22,000.00; Cataract surgery – Php16,000.00; and Hysterectomy – Php30,000.00.  (Edmon B. Agron)

education and communication (IEC), market research, advertising techniques and community mobilization to achieve the ultimate goal of behavioral impact in health.

In a study, PAHO identified that the major obstacle to effective implementation of selective, integrated mosquito control is the inability of the health sector or the project implementers to mobilize and coordinate resources needed to achieve and sustain behavioral impact among populations at risk of dengue.

Achieving behavioral results is a major challenge, according to PAHO, because existing programs only focus on changing people's knowledge and raising awareness. “Knowledge of the disease is not enough.

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Hospital scene during dengue peak season (Photo by inquirer.net)

COMBI pilot testing in Pampanga found effective against dengue


The Communication for Behavioural Impact (COMBI) approach is effective in addressing the dengue problem in San Fernando, Pampanga,” said Dr. Renalyn Tungkol, COMBI advocate, during the National Dengue Summit held at Heritage Hotel, Manila on 13 April 2012.

COMBI is a communication strategy introduced by the World Health Organization (WHO) for the elimination of leprosy, control of tuberculosis, lymphatic filariasis and other non-communicable diseases. This strategy uses a marketing communication approach aimed to encourage the community to adopt desirable behaviors towards the attainment of health goals.

The Department of Health (DOH) chose Barangay San Jose, San Fernando City, Pampanga as the pilot area for COMBI testing because it is a flooded community, has high population density, and has consistent high dengue cases since 2004.

According to Dr. Tungkol, “When COMBI is introduced in this community, dengue cases dramatically decrease to up to 76 percent.”

Dr. Tungkol reported that aside from the reduction of cases, the community's awareness on dengue such as mode of transmission, breeding sites and prevention measures increased. “Regular repetition of COMBI message via periodic campaign is necessary to keep the flame alive in a target community. Likewise, the local government units (LGUs), particularly the barangay officials, have a very important role in the success of COMBI,” said Dr. Tungkol.

COMBI is a multi-faceted anti-dengue approach that motivates every member of the society to take action. “This approach has demonstrated that proper problem identification, community involvement and strong political will make the goal of reducing dengue cases very attainable,” stressed Dr. Tungkol.  (Edmon B. Agron)

1st general assembly of EVHRDC tackles better strategies to support health R&D in Region VIII

Assistant Regional Director Ernesto M. Granada of the DOST Region VIII recommends new strategies to help Eastern Visayas Health Research and Development Consortium (EVHRDC) keep up with demands of health R&D in the region during the Consortium's 1st General Assembly and Research Forum for the year 2012 held at Tacloban City last 8 March 2012.

Assistant Regional Director Granada lamented, “Last year, if not for the proposal of Mr. Ding Olovia, wala sanang nasubmit na proposal ang EVHRDC. (Last year, if not for research proposal of Mr. Ding Olovia, EVHRDC would have not passed any research proposal for the year 2011.)”

The event featured the accomplishments of the consortium for the year 2012 and the research priorities of the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development (PCHRD) and the Department of Health (DOH) and the Regional Unified Health Research Agenda (RUHRA) of Region VIII. EVHRDC also showcased four studies that have been done and completed in Region VIII.

Dr. Elizabeth Matibag, Division Chief of the

Health research ethics training in Caraga highlights role of ERCs

The goals of research while important should never be permitted to override the health, well-being and care of research participants,” said Dr. Cecilia V. Tomas, Philippine Health Research Ethics Board (PHREB) Subcommittee Chair on Standards and Accreditation as she explained the role of ethics committee in the conduct of research at the seminar-workshop conducted by PHREB for member-institutions of the Caraga Health Research and Development Consortium (CHRD) last April 13-14, 2012 in Butuan City.

The seminar-workshop aimed to contribute to the development of a national and professional research ethics review system and promote the role of Ethics Review Committees (ERCs) in reviewing health research involving human participants in the Caraga region.

Dr. Cecilia V. Tomas facilitated the discussion on the functions of ERCs which include the following: 1) evaluate the conduct of research in their institutions in accordance with international and national guidelines; 2) promote research integrity



The 1st-general assembly EVHRDC held at Ritz Tower De Leyte


Research Division of Health Policy Development and Planning Bureau (HPDPB) of DOH, discussed the background of health research in the Philippines, the types of researches that the DOH prioritizes and the procedures on how to get funding for research from the DOH. Dr. Sonia C. Cabahit, Chair of the Research Management Committee of EVHRDC, presented the research priorities of RUHRA for the Region VIII. Ms. Anicia Catameo, Regional Project Officer of PCHRD, explained the research priorities of PCHRD.

In his speech, Assistant Regional Director Granada concluded that one of the biggest problems that the consortium now faces is its inability to support more research proposals. He explained, “One of the important concerns of EVHRDC, which was actually tackled by Ms. Catameo on her presentation of PCHRD's priorities, is its capacity to absorb more researches.”

On the spot, the Assistant Regional Director offered four suggestions to acknowledge this problem. He recommended doing more consultation with the

proponents of the proposals to be made, holding more training on writing and publishing of research, conducting more research proposal presentations and enrolling proposals for institutional support to PCHRD by the Research Management Committee of the consortium.

He urged everyone to follow these recommendations to bring the R&D in the region to another level. He said, “*Tutukan natin ito! (Let's focus on this!)*,” and added “*We have had a very fruitful day. Our learning and sharing have benefited us in DOST Region VIII, us well as EVHRDC,*”

The event was hosted by Ms. Mae Anne D. Reyes, EVHRDC coordinator, and presided by Prof. Jusie Lydia Siega-Sur, Dean of the University of the Philippines Manila (UPM) - School of Health Sciences.  (Richmond Q. Acosta)


MSU-IIT ... from p1

PCHRD Natural Substance Research Center. As a Tuklas Lunas Center, MSU-IIT is expected to generate cooperation among the nearby universities and research institutions towards collaborative researches in discovering potential drug sources in endemic terrestrial and marine species in Mindanao.

“This awarding is just the start of an effort to harness the natural resources of our country in a bid to strengthen the drug discovery and development campaign of PCHRD. Towards 2016, PCHRD along with the chosen Natural Substance Research Centers will continuously push boundaries to develop new drugs that will benefit the Filipino people in the long run,” said Dr. Antonio D. Ligsay, Chief of the Research and Development Management Division of PCHRD.

 (Rachel Ann Doreen D. Nadal)

Subcommittee Chair on Information, Dissemination, Training and Advocacy tackled the importance of ethics in health research. She reminded the group that an ethically sound research treats participants fairly by asking for their informed consent before they take part in any experiment.

“Research cannot be carried out under any type of conditions. Consider community and environment but focus on research subject. A person as a subject in research has an inherent dignity and should be protected against harm and should be treated with respect,” concluded Dr. Alora.  (Ana Ciaren P. Hipolito)

March is rabies awareness month

Rabies is one of the most dangerous viral disease. The virus infects the central nervous system of domestic and wild animals and spread to humans through bites, scratches and exposure to infected saliva.

According to the Control of Communicable Diseases of the United States, all mammals are susceptible to rabies, however, dogs are considered as main hosts and transmitter of rabies in most countries especially in Asia and Africa.

The early symptoms of rabies in humans are similar to many other illnesses, including fever, headache, and general weakness or discomfort. As the disease progresses, specific symptoms may appear including insomnia, anxiety, confusion, slight or partial paralysis, excitation, hallucinations, agitation, hypersalivation, difficulty in swallowing, hydrophobia (fear of water) and photophobia (fear of lights). What makes the disease very dangerous

Responsible pet ownership key to rabies-free Philippines

Dogs are said to be man's best friend. However, it is sad to know that dogs are the carriers of more than 99 percent of human rabies resulting to 55,000 deaths every year worldwide.

The culprit behind the increasing rabies cases and deaths is accounted to stray dogs. However, an expert from the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) Ms. Sarah Vallentine stressed, "We cannot address the problem on rabies by simply removing stray dogs in the street without addressing the problem in human behaviour."

At the Quezon City Rabies Prevention and Control

Republic Act 9482: Framework for cooperation against rabies

To remove the Philippines from the list of the top rabies countries in the world, the national government enacted Republic Act 9482, also known as the Anti-Rabies Act of 2007. This law led to the creation of the National Anti-Rabies Committee and the National Anti-Rabies Program, the framework that promotes cooperation among government agencies, non-government organizations (NGOs) and people's organization (POs) for the prevention and control of rabies in the country.

"Cooperation is an essential strategy in the anti-rabies program. Without cooperation, the target to attain a rabies-free Philippines on 2020 may not be

is that death usually occurs within days on the onset of these symptoms.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 55,000 people die from rabies every year, affecting mostly children under 15 years of age.

In the Philippines, rabies continues to be a public health issue causing 200 to 300 deaths every year based on

Department of Health (DOH) statistics.

In 2011, the DOH recorded 209 deaths with the highest incidence in Region 4A (28 deaths), Region 5 (25 deaths), Region 3 (23 deaths), Region 12 (21 deaths) and Region 11 (19 deaths).

Continuous information campaign to increase public awareness on the danger of the disease and programs on responsible pet ownership are among the key strategies of the government to lower

Summit held at Bulwagang Amoranto Quezon City Hall on 22 March 2012, Ms. Vallentine discussed strategies to address problems on rabies control and management.

"Dogs may not be born stray. In reality, dogs without human care are very unlikely to survive. Although it varies from different countries, most stray dogs either have an owner that allow them to roam or they were once owned but now abandoned. Stray dogs are results of irresponsibility of human owners. Dogs are roaming around to find food and to survive," Ms. Vallentine said.

In 2011, the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) recorded 216,624 dog bites incidence in the country

possible," said Atty. Heidi Caguioa of the Animal Kingdom Foundation during the Quezon City Rabies Prevention and Control Summit held at Quezon City Hall on 22 March 2012.

Even though the law has been in place since 2007, only few violators have been penalized and imprisoned according to the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) of the Department of Agriculture (DA). "This is due to lack of cooperation and serious implementation of the law in some communities in the provinces and even in Metro Manila," said Atty. Caguioa.

The law mandated concerned government agencies



Ms. Sarah Vallentine of the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) presented strategies to properly manage dog population during the rabies summit in Quezon City (Photo by eagron)

rabies death incidence in the country.

DOH also recommended the vaccination of domesticated animals to prevent them from becoming infected and transmitting rabies to humans.

At the moment, animal immunization is conducted by the Bureau of Animal Industry of the Department of Agriculture (DA-BAI) and the Local Government Unit (LGU) through its City Health Departments. (Edmon B. Agron)

and majority of the cases were caused by stray dogs. In response, the local government imposed the capture and killing of stray dogs in the communities. In Quezon City alone, there were more than 3,600 captured stray dogs. 3,500 of them were euthanized.

"It is good to prioritize human welfare but it does not have to be done in the expense of the animals," Ms. Vallentine appealed. "We should also consider a strategy that target the root cause of the problem - why dogs go astray and roam around. Here, pet owners play a vital role to address the problem. We should educate them to be responsible pet owners."

The responsibilities of a pet owner include provision of pet's basic needs like proper grooming, adequate food, and regular vaccination against rabies. "With these basic responsibilities, we can surely control the problem on rabies. We prevented the horrific suffering of rabies victims without causing a horrific suffering to dogs," concluded Ms. Vallentine. (Edmon B. Agron)

to move towards the control and eradication of rabies in the country. Salient provisions of the law include: mass vaccination of dogs; establishment of a central database for registered and vaccinated dogs; impounding, field control and disposition of unregistered, stray and unvaccinated dogs; conduct of education and information campaign; provision on pre-exposure treatment to high risk personnel and animal bite victims; provision of free routine immunization or Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) of school children aged 5-14 in high risk areas; and responsible pet ownership.

The law also specifies penalties to violators. Pet owners who fail or refuse to register and immunize their animals against rabies will be fined Php 2,000.00. Those who refuse to put their pets under observation after biting incident will be meted a fine of Php 10,000.

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WHO-IVM framework promotes collaboration against dengue

"Dengue and other vector-borne diseases are major contributors to the total global burden of disease and have profound effect, not only on health, but also on socio-economic development in resource-poor countries," said Dr. Moh Seng Chang, entomologist of the World Health Organization (WHO) during the Dengue Summit held at Heritage Hotel Manila on 13 April 2012.

The fight against a disease requires not only financial resources, appropriate technology and political commitment, but also a strategy, operational lines of responsibility and adaptive management systems. "This inspires WHO to create a Global Strategic Framework for Integrated Vector Management (IVM)," said Dr. Chang.

IVM is a rational decision-making process for the optimal use of resources for vector control. "IVM rationalizes the use of human and financial resources, and organizational structures for the control of vector-borne diseases," explained Dr. Chang.

WHO tackles biological agents for dengue mosquito control

"In the absence of vaccines and effective drug against dengue, vector control has been considered as an important strategy to prevent and control the disease," said Dr. Moh Seng Chang of the World Health Organization (WHO) during the Dengue Summit at the Heritage Hotel, Manila on 13 April 2012.

Among the strategies promoted by the WHO to control the population of dengue-carrying mosquitoes is the use of biological agents such as larvivorous fishes and predatory copepods like water bugs. "There is no such complete strategy to control dengue mosquitoes, but the use of these biological agents could be a big help, as part of the integrated vector control strategies," said Dr. Chang.

Two indigenous fish species were evaluated in India and found effective in controlling mosquitoes. *Gumbusia affinis*, a fresh water fish species, commonly known as "gambusia" or "mosquito fish," can consume about 100-300 mosquito larvae per day while *Poecilia reticulata*, commonly known as "guppy fish," can also consume about 80 to 100 mosquito larvae per day.

These fish species are surface feeders and are able to consume both anophelines (malaria mosquitoes) and cullines (dengue-carrying mosquitoes). They are resistant to water salinity, can easily multiply,

Dr. Chang identified WHO's key strategies for the global IVM framework: advocacy, social mobilization and legislation; collaboration; integrated approach on vector control; evidence-based decision making; and capacity building. "These principles should be incorporated in the national health strategies for the control of vector-borne diseases," said Dr. Chang.

While IVM encourages a multi-disease control approach and combined systematic application of interventions, "An effective vector control is not the sole responsibility of the health sector. It requires collaboration with other sectors, together with public and private agencies and institutions," said Dr. Chang.

On the other hand, Dr. Chang emphasized the significance of having a national program on IVM that will provide technical support on vector-borne disease epidemiology, surveillance and control technology, and adequate systems for program monitoring and quality control.

As a whole, the key for IVM and effective control for vector-borne diseases is collaboration and community participation," stressed Dr. Chang. (Edmon B. Agron)



A male water bug carrying eggs on his back (photo grabbed in the internet)

withstand transportation and does not require specialized equipment or containers for survivals.

According to Dr. Chang, "These fish species are now being used in India to eliminate mosquito larvae in wells, domestic water containers, concrete irrigation ditches, industrial tanks and cisterns."

Aside from larvivorous fishes, Dr. Chang also revealed that a water bug, *Diplonychus indicus*, can also be an effective biological control agent for dengue-carrying mosquitoes. In a study conducted by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the introduction of water bug in mosquito habitats such as used tires, tree holes, and containers reduced mosquito populations of up to 98 percent.

"Larvivorous fishes and water bugs are environment friendly and are safe to use. It is also cheaper compared to chemicals used in controlling dengue-carrying mosquitoes," said Dr. Chang. (Edmon B. Agron)



Philippine water bug, a promising dengue mosquito control agent

A water bug found in the Philippines could be an effective biological control agent for dengue-carrying mosquitoes," said in an interview by Dr. Pio Javier of the College of Agriculture, University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB).

Dr. Javier conducted a study entitled "Water bug *Diplonychus rusticus*: A promising predator for *Aedes aegypti* (Dengue mosquito)," to evaluate the possibility of using water bug in controlling the population of dengue-carrying mosquitoes in the Philippines.

According to Dr. Javier, the water bug was already proven effective against mosquito larvae in a study conducted in India. "But the water bug we are studying now is native and endemic in the

Philippines. It is smaller compared to the *Diplonychus indicus*, the water bug studied in India." The water bug species being studied by Dr. Javier is usually found in the rice fields and known as a voracious predator of aquatic insects including mosquitoes.

"The main advantage of the water bug compared to the other mosquito predators is its availability in many of the aquatic habitats, its tolerance to chlorination and its capability to reproduce easily," said Dr. Javier.

Initial findings of the study revealed that water

bug can consume 86-99 full grown mosquito larvae per day. "Upon introduction of mosquito larvae to the water bug in a water container, the predator immediately capture the larvae with its front legs in just a matter of seconds," said Dr. Javier.

The water bug can be distributed in all mosquito habitats such as used tires, water containers, and other mosquito breeding sites. "It can also be used to complement the OL mosquito trap developed by the Department of Science and Technology (DOST). While the OL trap attracts female mosquitoes to lay their eggs, the water bug can feed on the hatched eggs. This prevents the occurrence of dengue-carrying mosquitoes."

While the water bug shows potential to control the population of mosquitoes, "A more detailed study on its biology, ecology and feeding behavior is very important," stressed Dr. Javier. (Edmon B. Agron)

Health Research Council head calls for increased budget to fund research agenda

Dr. Jaime C. Montoya, Executive Director of the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development of the Department of Science and Technology (PCHRD-DOST) announced the increased in budget for health research in the country at the press conference for the Council's 30th anniversary. He said, *"Sa health research, our budget has increased by 150%."*

Despite the huge increase in budget, Dr. Montoya shared that the funding is still not enough as compared to what's required to implement the research agenda, which costs about PhP 1 billion a year. The international benchmark for health research budget as recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) is 2% of total health expenditure of a country. At present, the country's



Dr. Montoya interviewed by the media after the PCHRD press conference.

Philippine Health Research Registry launched for transparency in health research and clinical trials

"PCHRD's development of a registry to track health researches and clinical trials in the country is a step in the right direction. This program is commendable in light of the limitations that hamper the Philippine health system," lauded Vice-President Jejomar C. Binay, Sr. in his keynote speech, delivered by former Department of Health (DOH) Secretary Esperanza I. Cabral during the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development's 30th anniversary celebration last March 16.

The Philippine Health Research Registry (PHRR) is a tool for good governance to promote transparency and accountability in health research. PHRR is a publicly accessible database on health researches and clinical trials being conducted in the country. It differs from the HERDIN databases since data entries will be prospective and will be inputted and updated by the researchers themselves. The latter is a searchable bibliographic database of

The Philippine Health Research Registry (PHRR) is a tool for good governance to promote transparency and accountability in health research.

Philippine health information and resources.

According to Ms. Merlita M. Opeña, Chief of the Research Information, Communication and Utilization Division of PCHRD, the registry uses an open source platform, and the initial content of the registry will come from the PCHRD and PNHRs-funded researches.

"We will be publishing guide for researchers and institutions to ensure compliance. In August this year, we'd like to launch the full version. Right now, we need your feedback on how we can improve and populate the registry," said Ms. Opeña. (Rachel Ann Doreen D. Nadal)

AGHAM pushes for enactment of PNHRs Bill

To address the pressing health needs of the Filipinos, one of the bills being pushed by the Alyansa ng mga Grupong Haligi ng Agham at Teknolohiya para sa Mamamayan (AGHAM) Party List is the Philippine National Health Research System (PNHRS) Act of 2011.

Titled, *"An Act Institutionalizing the Philippine National Health Research System,"* the Bill mandates selected government agencies to allocate a percentage of their gross annual income to health R&D activities. When the bill turns into law, PNHRS will be assured of a stable fund source to support health researchers in generating ethical and relevant health knowledge and innovations.

When the bill turns into law, PNHRs will be assured of a stable fund source to support health researchers in generating ethical and relevant health knowledge and innovations

"The House Committee on Health considered the PNHRs Bill as one of the priority measures that has to be passed because we believe that it will make big improvement in the delivery of healthcare services in the country," said Congressman Angelo B. Palmones of AGHAM in his report during the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development's (PCHRD) 30th anniversary.

At present, the Bill is undergoing deliberations in the Committee on Appropriations at the House of Representatives.

Cong. Palmones encouraged the stakeholders to promote and support the passage of the PNHRs Bill. *"We enjoy the cooperation and assistance of the stakeholders for the passage of this Bill by lobbying for support with your district representatives,"* he said. (Rachel Ann Doreen D. Nadal)

Republic Act 9482 ... from p8

The local government unit performs a vital role in the implementation of the law. *"You are the frontliners in the implementation of the law. That is why it is important for you to understand and have a clear knowledge about the law,"* said Atty. Caguioa to barangay officials who attended the summit.

Atty. Caguioa also appealed to pet owners, *"You are the subject of this law. If only pet owners are responsible, there is no need for the law. We should be responsible and help attain the goal to be a rabies-free country,"* concluded Atty. Caguioa. (Edmon B. Agron)



Congressman Angelo B. Palmones of AGHAM expresses his support for the PNHRs Bill



DOST secretary Mario Montejo interviewed by media



DOH Secretary Enrique Ona expresses his support to the health research community during the PCHRD anniversary



RICUD Chief Ms. Merlita Opeña led the launching of PHRR during PCHRD anniversary



RDMD Chief Dr. Antonio Ligsay introduces the first Tuklas Lunas Center during the PCHRD anniversary

Ethical Guidelines for Health Research 2011 edition features principles for IPs, emerging technologies

Responding to the changing landscape of national health research system, the Philippine Health Research Ethics Board (PHREB) led by its Chair, Dr. Leonardo de Castro launched the 2011 edition of the National Ethical Guidelines for Health Research during the 30th anniversary of the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development of the Department of Science and Technology (PCHRD-DOST) at the Shangri-La Hotel, Makati City last March 16, 2012.

The National Ethical Guidelines for Health Research 2011 is the updated version of the 2006 guidelines. Guidelines for carrying out researches on clinical trials, herbal medicine, complementary and alternative medicine, epidemiological studies, social sciences, assisted reproductive technology were reviewed and revised to complement the changing demands of the research community.

"Heto na po ang pang-apat na edisyon ng ating National Ethics Guidelines. Ito

To further ensure protection of the rights and dignity of the human participants involved in research, the 2011 edition included guidelines for the conduct of research on specific population including indigenous peoples, pediatric population, and older persons.

po ay nararapat kasabay ng mga pagbabago ng ating siyensya [Here's the fourth edition of the National Ethics Guidelines. This is necessary in response to the changing science], explained Dr. de Castro.

To further ensure protection of the rights and dignity of the human participants involved in research, the 2011 edition included guidelines for the conduct of research on specific population including indigenous peoples, pediatric population, and older persons.

"Ito ay nagpapakita na ating tinutugunan ang mga isyu sa pagsasagawa ng pag-

PCHRD turns 30 ... from p1

encouraged development of health research in the country ever since its establishment in 1982 through Executive Order No. 784.

The Council has made a huge impact in the Philippine health sector in the last 30 years - new drugs and medical devices were introduced, laws were created, projects in controlling diseases came to life and more. PCHRD has ceaselessly come up with new schemes to keep up with the changing times and make health research even more relevant.

During the anniversary celebration, the Council presented new policy initiatives

The Council has made a huge impact in the Philippine health sector in the last 30 years - new drugs and medical devices were introduced, laws were created, projects in controlling diseases came to life and more.

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and strategies for Health R&D. Dr. Bernadette L. Ramirez, Scientist of the Lead Discovery for Infectious Tropical Diseases - Research Training in Tropical Diseases of the World Health Organization (WHO), discussed the Role of International Organizations in Policy Formation for Health R&D. Rep. Angelo B. Palmones, Vice Chair of the Congress Committee on Science and Technology, talked about the Policy Initiatives to Accelerate Innovation in Health. Dr. Emerlinda R. Roman, former President of the University of the Philippines (UP), represented Sen. Edgardo J. Angara, Chair of the Congressional Commission on Science and Technology and Engineering (COMSTE), explained Research and Innovation for Health and Development.

The celebration also provided vehicle for



Dr. Leonardo de Castro presents the 2011 edition of the National Ethical Guidelines for Health Research during the 30th anniversary celebration of PCHRD-DOST.

aaral na kaugnay ang mga tao [It shows that we respond to the issues in research which involve human participants], said Dr. de Castro.

The 2011 version also featured new guiding principles for emerging technologies like biosimilars, nanotechnology and acupuncture. It also included guidelines on the research ethics review process.

"Maipagmamalaki natin na tayo ay isa sa mga naunang bansa sa buong daigdig at ahensya na nagkaroon ng national ethics guidelines. Ito po ang nagpapakilala kung gaano ka-importante para sa atin ang pagkakaroon ng batayan sa pagsasagawa ng pananaliksik (We can proudly say that we are one of those countries and agencies in the world who was able to produce its national ethics guidelines. It shows how much we value ethical standards in the conduct of research]," said Dr. de Castro. (Ana Ciaren P. Hipolito)

the Council to launch some of its initiatives. Dr. Antonio D. Ligsay, Division Chief of Research and Development Management Division of PCHRD, introduced the DOST-PCHRD Natural Substance Research Program. Ms. Arlene Ruiz, Co-Chair of the Philippine National Health Research System (PNHRS) Research Agenda Committee, presented the National Unified Health Research Agenda (NUHRA) for 2011-2016. Dr. Leonardo D. De Castro, Chair of the Philippine Health Research Ethics Board (PHREB), unveiled the 2011 National Ethical Guidelines for Health Research. Dr. Cecilia V. Tomas, Chair of the PHREB Sub-Committee on Standards and Accreditation, discussed PHREB and Ethics Review Committees (ERC) Accreditation Program, while Ms. Merlita M. Opeña, Division Chief of the Research Information, Communication and Utilization Division of PCHRD, launched the Philippine Health Research Registry (PHRR).

Although there are still many things left to be done, it cannot be denied that the Council's 30 fruitful years of existence paved the way for expanding development in the Philippine health sector. Dr. Marita Reyes, co-Chair of PHREB and former UP-Manila Chancellor, said, *"Today we have been happy participants and witnesses to PCHRD's demonstration of how it has remained faithful to its mission of ensuring that health researches contributes to the improvement on the quality of life of the Filipino."* (Richmond Q. Acosta)