

# THE SERVIANT

OFFICIAL STUDENT PUBLICATION OF  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

THE UNIVERSITY OF CEBU



**PRIMORIS  
100% IN PLE**

STUDY TIPS FROM  
TOP 3 UCNIAN  
DR. CY ROMUGA

**HUMANS OF  
UCSM**

*"These experiences reminded me how the healthcare system in the Philippines is not yet at its greatest."*

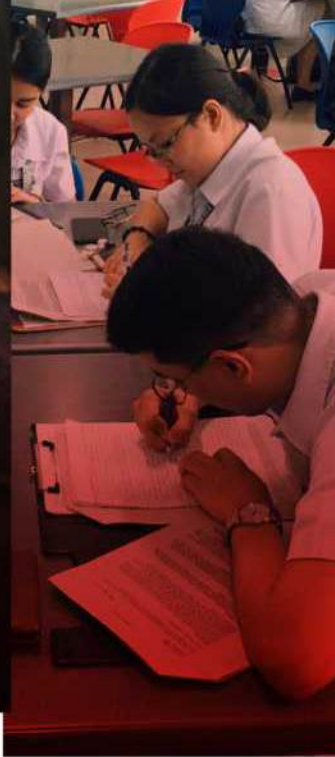
**COVID-19(+) STUDENTS  
SHARE THEIR  
EXPERIENCES**

**EXCLUSIVE  
INTERVIEW**

**AUGUSTO GO  
THE MAN THAT  
LAUNCHED  
DREAMS**

**ROMUGA  
TOP 3  
MARCH PLE**





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## ABOUT THE COVER

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a significant impact to medical students and the global community in general. The customary face-to-face classes have transitioned into an online form of learning. Going outside, much so during hospital rotation, demands extra precautionary measures following the set health-safety protocols. The cover of The Serviant Volume 04 portrays an aspiring physician who, in pursuit of her dreams, chooses to be enduring and resilient by courageously arming herself to trample an invisible enemy, knowing she has a bigger future to conquer.

On the Front Cover: Aaliah Dy of Batch Tritonos  
 Concept and Layout: Exzel Lei Fuerzas



**Dr. Ma. Melfer R. Montoya**  
**UCISM Dean**

# LETTER FROM THE DEAN

*My Dear Students,*

Greetings!

This pandemic has made the impossible possible. It has inspired the faint of hearts to be brave. It has encouraged us to think out of the box and endeavor to do the BEST. And yes, it has made many people “tech-savvy,” for the only choice is to face that ubiquitous screen. Indeed, it’s a school year full of challenges as we face a life that does not look back but onwards. Challenges will not wait.

Hats off to all of you for reaching this far. Like a mother, I feel your sadness because you are by yourself physically listening to lectures, doing laboratory work, doing clinics, joining case-based learning, taking part in small group discussions, and many others all done online. I feel your relief and optimism whenever you have small and big victories. I understand online exams are mind-boggling. Never lose faith and never blame yourself for anything that goes wrong. Better things are still coming your way. Be inspired by the kindness and examples of the people around you; your batchmates, schoolmates, and alumni, especially BATCH PRIMORIS.

At the start of the first semester SY 2020-2021, we were hopeful that COVID-19 cases would not have 2nd or 3rd surges so that we can plan for a better second semester. But that’s all water under the bridge. We are not even sure if we will have full face-to-face classes for SY 2021-2022. CHED gave us the limited face-to-face clinical clerkship rotation permit so the incoming clinical clerks, Batch Invictus, can avail of that.

There are many things I am eager to do when we meet face to face. Until such time, it will remain my wish. I like to end this by quoting Stephanie Lahart “Encourage yourself, believe in yourself, and love yourself. Never doubt who you are.”

See you all in the finish line!

Best regards to you and your family and may God bless us all.

Sincerely,

*Dean Montoya*

“Despite all these, we have to remain hopeful, for hope can get us through these formidable times.”



# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

*Dearest readers,*

The onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic has uncovered the fact that even if we are all facing the same storm, no, we are not in the same boat. Some have yachts, others are in a cruise ship, some are in canoes barely paddling their way through, and some are drowning — wrecked out in the open.

As aspiring Physicians, we are called, now more than ever, to press on and persevere in navigating towards the goal continuously. That is, to become driven to excel and serve to be able to help efficiently those who are in need. And to pause and remain humble should there come a time when the one who needs help is our self.

Now, let me give you a virtual pat on the back, or a hug if you may, for sailing it through the raging sea of the present time. It must not have been easy, but you are here, holding a copy of the latest issue of The Serviant. I believe it is not an accident. Perhaps, you have some time to spare, or maybe you are running out of time knowing not what to do but to turn a page to ease up the mind. Whatever it is that brought you here, I am beyond grateful.

The Serviant Team 4.0 presents to you the new face of UCSM's student publication. Despite all the challenges that we are currently treading, more than adapting, we want to emerge victorious and better. That is why, all the staff gave their passion and efforts in writing, creating, editing, revising, and transitioning the layout into a Magazine type. In this school year's issue, we have also anchored The Serviant on a theme that is "Resilience in the New Normal." The kind of resilience that calls for action while upholding the truth; promotes radical change and encourages others to move forward for the best. To put it simply, we aim to become a channel of factual information, inspiration and hope to our readers.

There are many reasons you should continue reading this magazine: for one, we have imprinted history. All the ink poured on this paper transpires the unfathomable experiences of the UCSM community amidst pandemic. We may not have totally reached the bottom, but we sure did our best to dive deeper into the heart of every dire wolf.

I hope you find meaning and purpose as you flip through the pages. And oh, no matter what you are going through, just keep swimming. *Who knows, you can walk on water too!*

Yours in glossy print,



**Angel Melody L. Legera**  
Editor-in-Chief

As aspiring Physicians, we are called, now more than ever, to press on and persevere in navigating towards the goal continuously.





# UCSM Boasts 100% in November 2020 and March 2021 PLE

ABBE MARGARETTE ARRADAZA

**Batch Primoris, the pioneering batch of the University of Cebu School of Medicine (UCSM), registered a 100% passing rate for both November 2020 and March 2021 Physician Licensure Exams (PLE).**

Thirty-nine (39) from the batch took the PLE on November 10, 11, 15, and 16, 2020, while four (4) took the PLE on March 7, 8, 14, and 15, 2021. Among those who took the March 2021 PLE was batch valedictorian Cy Johann Kent Romuga who ranked 3rd among all examinees, becoming the first topper from the school.

When asked to describe how it felt taking the PLE as a member of UCSM's pioneer batch, former student council president Dr. Louie Arizobal answered, "I was both pressured and driven all because I didn't want to disappoint. The downside to being a Primoris is that you never really know how you would do, come board exams. "I remember all the times in medical school where I questioned everything I was doing, and if all the struggle I've been through would guarantee me a license in the end. I didn't want any other student in UCSM to feel what I felt, and to have the same doubts I had. "The want to make all the dire wolves trust in the system that was undeniably hard but would eventually reward them in the end was the driving force that pushed me past my breaking point."

**It felt like the huge weight we carried on our shoulders for 5 excruciating years was finally taken off. It made every challenge worth it. Every doubt, erased.**

Dr. Arizobal says he felt "relieved" after hearing the news that all UCSM examinee passed.

"Seeing everyone in school celebrating and being proud of what we have accomplished made me feel even happier than the idea of finally being a licensed physician. Ultimately, I felt grateful to Primoris. I personally couldn't have done it if it wasn't for my batchmates."

Upon finding out that all of batch Primoris passed the PLE, UCSM dean Dr. Ma. Melfer Montoya recalls feeling like she was in a "dreamland". "It felt surreal," she said. "[I] can't put my feelings in words for that great gift batch Primoris gave to the school. After that dream-like state, the first two words that came out were 'thank you'. Thank you to our Lord Almighty, for He blessed us way more than we asked for. Thank you to our school chairman and president Atty. Augusto W. Go and to our Chancellor and UC Medical Center president Ms. Candice Gotianuy for the big support and trust.

"Thank you to my team of department [chairpersons] and their faculty for their innovation and passion. They serve as role models for every UCnian medical student, inculcating in them the basic tenets on how to be passionate in their work and be compassionate to their patients. Together with them are our non-teaching staff who also worked so hard," she continued.

The dean ascribes to them how students "learn to live our motto, 'Driven to Excel, Driven to Serve'".

Furthermore, the dean extended her gratitude to the school's new doctors, all of whom she met for the first time in 2015. "I admired how trusting they were of the newest medical school at that time with no record to boot," she said.

The dean shared that it is her prayer that the new doctors would "use this gift God gave them in the service to others".

"I was sure we shared the same vision, that's why they applied in our school. Through the years I considered them as thrivers for they flourished in our very challenging and innovative curriculum."

***"Driven to Excel, Driven to Serve"***





# UCSM Pride and Honor: Dr. Cy Johann Kent Romuga is TOP 3 in March 2021 PLE

MARK ANTHONY ALMOSARA

**The University of Cebu School of Medicine (UCSM) celebrates this year as their product from the pioneer batch attained 3rd place during the March 2021 Physician Licensure Exam (PLE).**

Despite the grueling coverage of the two-weekend examination and the mental and physical strains, Dr. Cy Johann Kent Romuga, the class valedictorian of batch Primoris, achieved a high rating that landed him third among the 1,927 examinees nationwide.

In a brief interview, Dr. Romuga disclosed essential things that would help us picture his challenges and those crucial things like the proper mindset we have to achieve to succeed in this venture.

The days leading to the exam made Romuga feel worried, but he stressed that he went ahead and emptied his mind of what may come and shaded what he had to shade during the actual exam.

When asked how different the PLE was from other exams he took, he said, "It was different because taking the exams in the school had me having one goal: to be in the top 4 to have a book allowance. However, my goal during the PLE is to have a relative rating to help me with my application for residency."

What he expects the most is only to pass. He states that it is unhealthy to expect to top the examinations and the questions are known to be random. He settled that nothing is certain in life and expecting too much might put unnecessary stress on his mind.

UC President Atty. Augusto Go promised parents and students to give a brand new car for those who will top the licensure exams. In the case of Romuga, he requested cash in lieu of the car.

He jovially said that aside from the fact that he cannot drive, he thought to himself that if it were a sedan, he would reconsider because it might sell for more but selling is a pain and he can't tolerate people making bargains. And also, the money he received might help him as a cushion for emergency purposes.

On April 8, he received a Php500,000 cheque from Atty. Augusto Go and Ms. Candice Gotianuy, together with the presence of the UCSM Dean Dr. Ma. Melfer R. Montoya and Chairman of the Department of Medicine Dr. Merci Uy.

As of the present, Dr. Romuga's plans include residency, marriage, and fellowship. He thinks he would probably pursue Internal Medicine but is unsure what institution he would apply to. He further added, "Marriage is definitely with my girlfriend, and fellowship is a story for another day."

To those who are next in line in this year and for the upcoming years of PLE takers, here's a message from the topnotcher:

"You can pass by studying smart. You can attain a good rating by studying smart and hard. I am fairly confident that all graduates from UCSM after us can attain a 100% passing rate, so be confident about the mental hardships you have had during medical school and know how it built a solid foundation on exam time. Just tell yourself that you can and make an effort to back up that fact."



Dr. Romuga would like to extend a message of gratitude to the following:

**To Atty. Go and Ms. Candice:**

*Thank you, Sir and Ma'am, part of why I wanted to aim for excellence is because of the uncompromising approach you took in starting the school and hospital, which I am sure were plenty.*

*Thank you for making it so easy to become a scholar just by having good class standing and nothing else; it makes the process objective and merit-based. Lastly, I'd like to thank you for the 5k down payment for the enrollment.*

**To the faculty:**

*Thank you for the patience. I remember the days when our exam results were horrible and there may have been times when you lost expectations from us. I always had faith in the stress you had put us in; although I do not share this sentiment with a lot of students, there is no denying it builds character.*

**To the non-teaching staff:**

*Thank you, everyone, in the non-teaching staff. Almost all of you are nice people, from laboratory assistants, amphitheater technicians, library staff, guards, and even the canteen staff. Not once did I feel disrespected at the slightest and I think many of my classmates also felt the same.*

*I'd also like to thank the following further,*

*The first bunch of friends I had when I was in my first year.*

*My second-year blockmates, the most efficient block I had.*

*My third-year blockmates who shared their most mentally exhausting year of medicine with me.*

*My clerkship blockmates, we weren't the most diligent but got our tasks done.*

*Lastly, my friends who went to Manila for PGIship. I know you all had different reasons for going there but having you with me made things a lot easier.*

# UCSM Frontliners and Medical Clerks Vaccinated

MA. CHERRY ANN GROGORIO



February 28, 2021 was a historic day for the Philippines as the first batch of COVID-19 vaccines arrived in the country. Priority sectors for the national immunization program were identified based on the resolution by the Interim National Immunization Technical Advisory Group and the DOH Technical Advisory Group.

Being one of the first lines of defense against COVID-19, medical frontliners from University of Cebu School of Medicine (UCSM) received their first dose of the vaccine on March 6, 2021. In addition, Batch Tritonos, medical clerks from the school also received their first

dose of vaccines on March 10 and 14, 2021 at Perpetual Succour Hospital and University of Cebu Medical Center (UCMed), respectively. Among those first vaccinated were UCMed president Candice Gotianuy and the UCSM department chairpersons.

The vaccines administered were Sinovac and AstraZeneca. Both vaccines require two doses; Sinovac has a 4-week interval between doses, while AstraZeneca has a 4-12 week interval.

Before getting vaccinated, the medical frontliners were given counsel about the vaccine, after which consent for

vaccination was obtained. Those who wished to receive the vaccine were subjected to a screening process where pertinent medical history was asked and vital signs taken. After the vaccination, they were monitored for 30 minutes for any possible side effects, and vital signs were again taken.

As of April 11, 2021, all UCSM doctors (sans those with health issues) and all but 53 of the medical clerks have been fully vaccinated with Sinovac. Those who received the AstraZeneca vaccine are currently waiting for their second dose. All medical clerks are expected to be fully vaccinated by the end of May.

## UCSM Enlisted in DOH-7 Campaign Against TB

ABBE MARGARETTE ARRADAZA

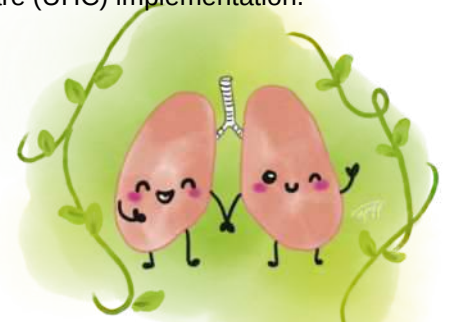


In an effort to strengthen Cebu City's fight against tuberculosis (TB), the Department of Health Central Visayas Center for Health Development (DOH CVCHD) and the Cebu City government partnered with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to launch a Citywide TB Elimination Campaign (CiTEC).

One of the program's implementing institutions is the University of Cebu Medical Center (UCMed), and in a move to involve medical students in the said program, University of Cebu School of Medicine (UCSM) dean Dr. Ma. Melfer R. Montoya signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the Engagement of Medical Students as TB Treatment Adherence Monitors on April 30, 2021.

Under this program, DOH CVCHD and the Cebu City Health Department aim to provide TB screenings to locate and begin treatment on at least 900 individuals with TB from May to September 2021.

The program adopts "Oplan TB-free Kami!" of the national communication campaign called #TBFreePH and will serve as a model for Universal Health Care (UHC) implementation.







# COVID Relief Initiatives

VENICE ANGEL ROSALES

**On the 14th of March 2020, President Rodrigo Duterte declared a state of calamity in the Philippines as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Both public and private hospitals were screaming for help due to a dwindling workforce and a continuing shortage of essential medical equipment. Not only were the number of deaths and people being infected with COVID-19 escalating, but there was also a spike in the amount of people losing their jobs and livelihoods all over the country.**

A year ago, the University of Cebu School of Medicine (UCSM) did not turn a blind eye. A year after, the school is still up for the challenge.

The UC Council of Medicine launched KAUBAN TA ANI: A fundraiser, a call for donations of any amount, in order to equip our front liners in the fight against COVID-19. Council president Alyanna Crisologo herself delivered boxes of surgical masks, N95 masks, and vitamins to the staff of the University of Cebu Medical Center (UCMed).

The faculty and the council also gave their support to Batch Primoris, UCSM's pioneer batch who were about to take the Physician's Licensure Examination (PLE), by distributing care packages, good luck messages, and a holy Eucharist.

October 24, 2020, the council, in partnership with DASIG,

gave out the first batch of care packages to 33 reviewees staying in Cebu. Each package contained snacks, long brown and plastic envelopes, sticky notes, coffee, vitamin C, and notes with quotes or bible verses for encouragement.

The second batch of care packages, which was supposedly going to be given on the first day of the PLE, was instead delivered during the thanksgiving mass. In the packages were face masks, alcohol, candies, and pencils from the faculty.

On December 23, 2020, the council distributed noche buena packages to 43 UCSM students stranded in Cebu and Mandaue, as well as to 100 families in Brgy. Garing, Consolacion through the Barangay Health Workers of the said barangay.

As a response to the requests of various hospitals for personal protective equipment, Alpha Chi Sigma (AXE) organized DUYOG: A Solidarity Concert for our Frontliners in Cebu in coordination with K-boyz of Cebu. The online concert, held on July 23, 2020 showcased the talents of homegrown Cebuano artists.

The funds collected were able to sustain the donation drive that AXE initiated on March 25, 2020 for four months.

AXE successfully provided face shields, washable face masks, PPE suits, and exhaust cover filters and inlet adapters for 3M 6200 respirators to the frontliners of different barangay health centers, clinics and hospitals in Cebu.

DASIG in partnership with AMSA-affiliated schools of Cebu, spearheaded the Cebu Crisis Assistance Team (CCAT), a group formed during the time of pandemic. Funds and food were gathered from the monetary and in-kind donations of the members and other private individuals and companies like ABACA Baking Company and Bo's Coffee. Volunteer students from CCAT led the distribution of over 15,000 personal protective equipment and more than 600 food packs to various hospitals, clinics, and barangays in Cebu.

The accomplishments of UCSM are the results of the combined efforts of the faculty, student council, donors, and student organizations AXE & DASIG. These achievements are a testimony that UCnian doctors strive to put others before themselves and uphold the school's motto: "Driven to Excel, Driven to Serve".







# UCSM Hosts podcast on COVID-19 Vaccination

NICKSON FELIX EPE

## CAN THE VACCINE AGAINST THE COVID-19 HIT US WITH ITS BEST SHOT?

As the Philippines started its COVID-19 vaccine rollout over a month ago, an expert from the Department of Health (DOH) tackled the importance of getting a jab of the much-awaited vaccine in the podcast entitled COVID-19 Vaccines: Hit Me With Your Best Shot hosted by the University of Cebu School of Medicine (UCSM) last March 27.

The podcast hosts, third-year UCSM students Jamie Guzman and Raphaela Jurilla, engaged in a lively interview with the episode's guest speaker, Dr. Juanito Zuasula Jr., a DOH epidemiologist and Chairman of UCSM's Department of Preventive, Family, and Community Medicine.

Dr. Zuasula considered vaccines as "the last in our armamentarium of protection," and the tugboat of public health because it is where public health is anchored. He added that without vaccines, people would be dying from all these infectious diseases.

Despite being touted as the fastest vaccines ever created, the COVID-19 vaccines have undergone different phases to check their safety and efficacy, he assured.

"If the product has an emergency use authorization (EUA), that product is now considered safe. The margin of safety is good enough for the community to benefit," he explained.

(FDA) has granted EUA to the following COVID-19 vaccines: Coronavac made by Chinese drug firm Sinovac; Sputnik V created by Russian medical company Gamaleya Institute; and those formulated by Western pharmaceutical companies Pfizer-BioNTech and AstraZeneca. As of this writing, other drug companies like Johnson & Johnson and Moderna have applied for EUA. Sinovac and AstraZeneca vaccines—both donated to the national government—are currently available, with the government promising more supply of vaccines in the coming months.

Like all vaccines, the COVID-19 vaccine develops antibodies that would fight off possible infection, Dr. Zuasula said. But being a newly-developed vaccine, he mentioned the length of immunity and protection by the COVID-19 vaccine has not been established, with studies about the impact of the vaccines on COVID-19 mutations still ongoing.

"Nobody can tell even now as we are already starting with the vaccination as to how long is the coverage or immunity. What we know through the Randomized Clinical Trials (RCTs) of these vaccines is that they are able to develop neutralizing antibodies," he said. Dr. Zuasula noted that those who got inoculated with the COVID-19 vaccine could experience side effects like pain at the injection site, fever, and pruritus. He added adverse effects like joint pains, gradual rise in blood pressure, and tachycardia should be looked out for.

He assured that these side effects are mild and transitory and that the regional DOH has not yet heard of anyone experiencing severe adverse effects, though the government is prepared to manage such events.

As a precaution, he reminded those with underlying health conditions or who are taking maintenance medications to ask a medical professional if they are qualified to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Should a vaccinee worry about signs and symptoms, Dr. Zuasula advised that they should call the hotline numbers found on the vaccination cards. Despite getting a COVID-19 vaccine shot, Dr. Zuasula reminded vaccine recipients to continue practicing minimum public health standards like physical distancing, wearing of face masks, and frequent handwashing. "There are no vaccines out there considered to be 100% effective. If a person is vaccinated, he/she still has a chance of getting the virus, but your chances of [developing] the severe form is really low." Dr. Zuasula capped off his interview by inviting the public to get their "best shot" of the COVID-19 vaccine. "If you love someone/somebody, have yourself vaccinated," he said.

The episode was the last in the health policy podcast series titled **Tell Me(d) About It** produced by the Association of Philippine Medical Colleges (APMC) Student Network Visayas Regional Health Policy Committee, conducted in partnership with UCSM's Alpha Chi Sigma (AXE), Driven Advocates for Sustainable and Innovative Goals (DASIG), and the UC Council of Medicine.

# AXE in the **New Normal**

MA. CHERRY ANN GORGONIO

The coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) brought the world to its knees. It showed how helpless we are in the face of a global pandemic. Businesses closed and lives were lost. But it did not stop Alpha Chi Sigma (AXE) from conducting impactful activities and extending help to those who need it.

Last September 10, 2020, AXE organized a webinar for World Suicide Prevention Day, with Dr. Glenda Basubas, chairwoman of the Philippine Mental Health Association – Cebu Chapter, as guest speaker. Highlighted during the webinar was the importance of communication and its essential role in suicide prevention.

The event was made possible through the help of Committee Outreach, Resource and Education (CORE) from Cebu Doctors University – College of Medicine and Student Advocates for Public Health and Environment (SAPHE) from Matias H. Aznar Memorial College of Medicine.

AXE also collaborated with the other student-led organizations in the school, namely Driven Advocates for Sustainable and Innovative Goals (DASIG) and the University of Cebu (UC) Council of Medicine, to spearhead several activities for the UCSM students throughout the school year.

The first activity was Pet Showcase, where students were encouraged to show off their pets that provided them with emotional support and comfort, and reduced their stress and anxiety. The second collaborative activity was a webinar entitled An Immersion on Mindfulness held on October 17, 2020. The speaker, Mr. Jason Robles, discussed the importance of mental health in the life of every individual. Lastly, the Med Got Talent event showcased the students' artistic talents in the form of their masterpieces.

Come Christmas season, AXE extended its compassion to the Home of Love, a rehabilitation and livelihood training center at Tuburan, Cebu handled by nuns to help victims of human trafficking by delivering food packs, educational DVDs, and special Christmas gifts.

With the country facing a public health crisis, licensure examinations under the medical field were carried out to augment the nation's healthcare system. Sixteen (16) AXE members from UCSM's pioneering batch, Batch Primoris, passed the November 2020 Physician Licensure Examination (PLE), while two (2) passed the March 2021 PLE. The November 2020 passers are Miles Andre Cortes, Roman Antonio Datan, Artem John Dy, European Henley Sanchez, Adrian Cecily Beldad, Divine Romnette Castillo, Nadine Cecily Fornolles, Kyvelle Lhasa Angob, Czarina Marie Asentista, Mary Claire Gonzaga, Sharmaine Naquila, Maria Leanne Queniahah, Jacqueline Costaños, Goldie Pogosa, Sarah Aurora Tabada, and Marie Angelique Balbutin. The March 2021 PLE passers are Cy Johann Kent J. Romuga and Benito Miguel Lantin, with Romuga placing 3rd among all takers, becoming the school's first PLE topnotcher.



## 2020: A Year of Growth for **DASIG**

VENICE ANGEL ROSALES

Driven Advocates for Sustainable and Innovative Goals (DASIG) has shown everyone that people with hearts that are devoted to serve are unstoppable even in the midst of a pandemic. Rey Sevilleno, the President of DASIG, walked us through how their visions turned into milestones.

Prior to the start of the school year, DASIG organized the school's first online Orientation Series that aimed to endorse academic advice and tips to incoming second years, third years and clerks.

With activities being held online, AMSA-Philippines' activities became more accessible. Delegates were sent to the National Medical Schools Conference 2020, AMSEP-Turkey, and AMSEP-Indonesia student exchange programs. The online platform also paved an easier collaboration with the different AMSA-affiliated orgs in the country. Also in partnership with different AMSA-affiliated schools in Visayas, DASIG held one of their biggest events of the school year: MedTalk. This sought to discuss the gaps of Philippine healthcare system.

The Standing Committee on Medical Education (SCOME) partnered with the Students' Pedagogical Community (SPC) and the UC Council of Medicine to conduct Hoot Camp Practice Sessions, which aimed to prepare the first- and second-year students for their practical exams in different subjects.

After becoming one of the finalists for GAWAD AMSA Award for Project Onde, the Standing Committee on Public Health (SCOPH) together with the Standing Committee on Environmental Health (SCOEH) continued with the follow-up project – Project Lanjal.

This project has provided the target community essential protection against COVID-19 by donating Personal Protective Equipment, hygiene kits, information awareness and retrofitting the daycare center.

The Standing Committee on Reproductive Health, HIV, and AIDS conducted its very first Webinar on Violence Against Women and Children in the Time of Pandemic which discussed about access to VAWC services.

Finally, the Standing Committee on Mental Health (SCOMH) launched the first phase of Project Daisy, a project that aims to be an avenue for UCSM students to release themselves from any stress or anxiety they may have been experiencing.

Even though the pandemic changed many of DASIG's plans, the organization was able to maximize the online platform and even reach more participants and members through their various events.







# UCSM attends virtual APMC-SN Regional and National Conventions

ANGEL ANNE AMBAYAN

On January 23 and 24, 2021, students from the University of Cebu School of Medicine (UCSM) participated in the 9th Association of Philippine Medical Colleges - Student Network (APMC-SN) Visayas Regional Convention with the theme "Dumdom 2021: From the Foundation of the Past; To Building a Better Future" that was held via Zoom.

Dr. Enrico B. Gruet, Dean of the host school Cebu Doctors University College of Medicine, opened the convention with this reminder: "Physicians and organizations with strong foundations will be able to weather any crisis under continuous improvement to contribute to a better future for all. Your medical education will be the foundation for your future."

UCnian medical students exuded excellence in representing the school in the different competitions. Mark Johnuel Duavis, Mary Mariz Susaya, and Mark Joseph Zurbito from batch Tritonos were hailed the champions in the Basic Sciences Category with their research paper entitled "Anti-Angiogenic Activity of Pomacea canaliculata Lam (Golden Apple Snail) Extract Using In Ovo Chick Chorioallantoic Membrane (CAM) Assay".

Duavis was also a finalist in the translational research category with the paper entitled "Social Determinants of Health Care Seeking Delay among Newly Diagnosed Symptomatic Pulmonary Tuberculosis Patients in Cebu City, Philippines: A Cross-Sectional Study" winning fifth place.

Meanwhile, Nikko Dajao, also from batch Tritonos, was recognized as one of the ten Mga Natatanging Mag-aaral ng Medisina ng Pilipinas - Visayas.

Lastly, the UCSM's debate team consisting of Lawton Ace Acapulco, Mia Chanel Russel, and Glorienne Estela Tremedal from batch Kairos and Garren Cortes, Gerald Munteurto, and L'Mondee Rio Neri from batch Invictus became one of the semi-finalists among ten competing teams in the Interscholastic Medical Debate Competition.

The 4th APMC-SN National Convention with the theme "Hiling4Healing: Ignite, Intensify, and Integrate Towards a New Perspective". took place on March 19-21, 2021, also via Zoom.

Vice President of the Philippines Hon. Maria Leonor G. Robredo opened the

event with a note of encouragement, saying: "Reshape our institutions, strengthen our communities, and inspire others through your example."

Despite coming from a fairly new medical school, UCSM students proudly hit the spotlight. The research team led by Mark Johnuel Duavis bagged the Best Poster Award in the Basic Sciences Category.

One striking lesson that we wish to impart to our fellow medical students comes from a message by medical anthropologist, national academician, and former UP Diliman chancellor Dr. Michael L. Tan in his talk on Spirituality and Culture: Hidden Challenges for Physicians.

"Appreciate our blessings, find joy and power in the goodness around us, and let kindness be our parameter,"

These events by the APMC-SN amplified a call for a greater cause: that every medical student may rise beyond our current circumstances. We are the next generation of physicians and leaders whose purpose is not only to provide service in healthcare, but also to reshape the country into a better Philippines.

## CINCTUS BAGS FIRST PLACE: 4th DOH CVCHD Regional Research Congress — INFOMERCIAL Contest

ABBE ARRADAZA

Block 4 of Batch Cinctus from the University of Cebu School of Medicine won first place in the infomercial contest held by the Department of Health - Central Visayas Center for Health Development (DOH CVCHD) during the 4th Regional Research Congress on June 15-18, 2021.

The winning team composed of M.A.F Anfone, M.D. Catacutan, H.J. Cobarde, N.F. Epe, J.M. Gordo, M.C.A. Gorgonio, C.K. Gozo, T.D. Mangonon, E.K. Monton, C. Tubac, and N.R. Turado received a cash prize of Php 7,000.

With the theme "#BIDASolusyon against COVID-19 Infodemic through Research and Effective Health Communication", the contest was open to all academic institutions in Central Visayas. Entries were to showcase "how we as an individual or as a community can be part of the solution to the infodemic that is happening together with the COVID-19 pandemic."

The top 3 entries will be used by DOH CVCHD to promote more effective health communication amidst pandemic.



# LEADS Party in UCSM Election win

NICKSON FELIX EPE

Leaders Advocating the needs of the Student body (LEADS) Party clinched a landslide win in the recent Council of Medicine (CoM) elections.

The UCSM Commission on Elections (COMELEC) declared that all Council of Medicine elective posts were grabbed by LEADS Party candidates during the regular elections which was held online last June 3, 2021.

The new Council of Medicine officers-elect are: Ms. Jamie Guzman, President; Mr. Sam Cauban, Vice President – Internal Affairs; Ms. Mae Anne Shailyn Pazon, Vice President – External Affairs; Ms. Joshmary Denice Saplad, Executive Secretary; Ms. Lyka De La Rosa, Treasurer; Mr. John Manuel Gordo, Auditor; Mr. Christopher Ivan Flores, Public Information Officer; Ms. Angel Melody Legera, APMC Representative; Ms. Kissler Romarate, Year 4 Representative; Ms. Marighel Gravador, Year 3 Representative; and Ms. Rackelle Beanne Pajares, Year 2 Representative.

Despite running unopposed, the party and the candidates gladly responded to questions from the student body. Their responses as well as their platforms and goals were posted in the UCSM COMELEC Facebook Page prior to the elections.

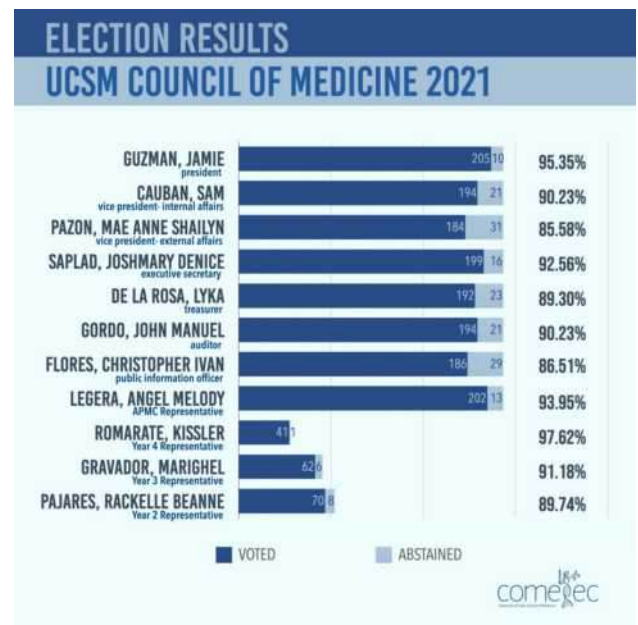
In her statement, LEADS Party standard-bearer and new CoM President-Elect Ms. Jamie Guzman expressed her gratitude to the student body and adds that she is “excited to be working with a group of amazing individuals who are driven to serve the community.” As a new school year brings uncertainties and challenges, the incoming junior clerk reassures, “We will do our best to advocate for the student's needs. It is our goal to listen and to serve you.”

Meanwhile, COMELEC Chairperson Sol Langomez bares in an interview that she is thankful to the student body for the participation and cooperation. “The success of this year's elections would not have been possible without the students' concern regarding student representation and leadership. To the dean, Dr. Melfer Montoya, we would like to thank you for the endless support given to us.”

Chairperson Langomez also reports that no questions and protests were lodged to the commission. However, despite the seemingly orderly polls and accessible online voting platform, voter turnout dismally went down from 66.57% last year to only 55.13% this year.

Nevertheless, she adds, “We were challenged by the pandemic as it forced us to different circumstances. It was a difficult year, but in the end, we were able to face it head on. As we continue to tread this journey, let us continue to support each other.”

The induction and oath-taking ceremony of newly-elected officers are slated to happen on the first part of July this year.



The University of Cebu School of Medicine declares Academic Break. No synchronous classes and asynchronous activities for Batch Cinctus (Level 1) on April 17 to April 21, and Batch Kairos (Level 2) on April 22 - April 25.

Last April 16, 2021, the UC Council of Medicine held an online zoom meeting with the dean, where the major concern of the student body was echoed: a short pause, for both the students and the doctors, to refill the strength the UCSM community has almost emptied, and to regain the mental health that has been put at stake during this online learning.

The dean acted in everyone's favor, along with the agreement of the different department chairmen and batch representatives. This marked the first ever Academic Break of the institution.

*They say a small leak can sink a ship. It's been a year of floating by and patching holes of the ship we built weakly. We were sinking. We yelled for help. We were heard. It was just a couple of days, but we are beyond grateful. It's a priceless opportunity to cover some of the holes, so our ship can sail again.*



# Accelerated Vaccines: A Race to Immunity

SOL LANGOMEZ

**SARS-COV2, commonly known as COVID-19 has ravaged the world with approximately 145 million cases and 3 million deaths. When the pandemic started in January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) responded quickly. They gathered data from the Chinese government to release guidelines and strategic plans to aid countries with weaker health systems. Currently, there is still no known treatment for the virus but the race for the vaccine has ended. Multiple manufacturers have developed different vaccines.**

The administration of vaccines prevents the disease or lessens the chance of severe symptoms. It works by administering a part or inactivated whole of the virus to activate our immune system. When the actual virus is contracted, our immune system can then identify and destroy the virus faster. Questions were posed by the public regarding the safety of the vaccines considering that it took scientists only 1 year to develop them. This rapid development was attributed to the release of the genome sequence of the virus a few days after the novel virus was known to the WHO and the global collaboration in gathering data regarding COVID-19. The different COVID-19 vaccines mainly differ in the technology platform or part of the virus used to instigate the immune system.

How are vaccines developed? Normally, drugs and medical paraphernalia development undergo stages one at a time to ensure safety and efficacy when used by the public. Pre-clinical trials start by screening the possible Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients.

In the vaccines' case, will this certain part of the virus instigate the production of antibodies in animals. Phase I trials involve a small number of healthy individuals (25-50) to check the safety when administered to humans. Phase II involves a larger group of individuals (around hundreds) and aims to identify the correct dosage to be administered and assess safety. Phase III requires the safety and efficacy of the drug with thousands of participants. The developers will then register themselves to the state it wishes to distribute the product. From the Pre-clinical trials to Phase III, the data will be scrutinized. If approved, the drug can be marketed and Phase IV, Post-marketing surveillance is done by asking the public to report any side effects observed when taking the drug. Clinical trials may be paused due to certain adverse effects or concerns in efficacy.

But due to the dire need for vaccines and treatments, drug development is accelerated. The drug in question has to undergo all 5 stages, but since it normally takes years to do the stages one by one, these stages may be done in parallel. They should still be done in order, but preclinical trials, Phase I, Phase II, and Phase III may be done together. After conducting the 4 stages, Phase IV is critical in recording any adverse effects. This is essential since the 4 previous stages are hastened. Developers are constantly researching on how to improve the vaccine in terms of safety, efficacy, and storage with the collected data. The vaccines are then heavily scrutinized. The drugs are granted emergency use once safety and efficacy are ensured.

The first Vaccine to be given an Emergency Use Listing (EUL) was the COMIRNATY COVID Vaccine mRNA Vaccine by Pfizer/BionTech. This was acknowledged last December 31, 2020 by WHO. The EUL allows drugs to be used during health emergencies even with limited data regarding the long-term effects of the item in question. Although certain vaccines were given EULs, it is still the discretion of the country's regulations to approve the use of the vaccine.

In the Philippines, the Center for Drug Regulation and Research and an Expert Panel of at least 3 individuals are responsible for screening and recommending drugs for emergency use. As of April 19, 2021 the vaccines approved for emergency use in the Philippines are the following: Pfizer - BioNTech, Oxford Astrazeneca, Coronavac (Sinovac), Gamaleya Sputnik V, Janssen (Johnson and Johnson) and Bharat BioTech.

With this, vaccines currently distributed in the country can give the public hope for regaining some sense of normalcy. Although the road ahead is filled with challenges, it is the collective effort of each individual that can help curb this pandemic.



# COVID-19 MYTHS

IRIS MARIE ANTONIO

“A major goal of education is the debunking of miseducation.” As medical students, one way we could help in the COVID-19 pandemic is to educate about the virus and disseminate proper safety practices and guidelines. However, misinformation popping everywhere can cause confusion and could be a potential roadblock in this goal. But worry not, The Serviant is here to debunk some of the common myths and misinformation from the internet, and word of mouth or folk wisdom here in the Philippines. The following are listed below:



## WEARING FACE MASKS CAN CAUSE CARBON DIOXIDE (CO2) BUILD UP AND COULD LEAD TO HYPOXIA

**FACT:** According to WHO, “the prolonged use of medical masks when properly worn does not cause carbon dioxide intoxication nor oxygen deficiency.” Oxygen and carbon dioxide molecules are small enough to freely diffuse into surgical masks and even on special protective masks such as N95. Although there’s an associated discomfort and difficulty breathing on some people while wearing a mask, this does not indicate carbon dioxide build-up or lack of oxygen in the body. In fact, even before the pandemic, the use of face masks is a practice among health care workers. There are no serious adverse effects noted on wearing masks. Face masks, when worn correctly, also prevent other serious illnesses such as flu and pneumonia. The use of face masks is encouraged by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, World Health Organization and Department of Health to prevent the further spread of the coronavirus, especially in places where it is difficult to perform social distancing.



## TUOB IS A CURE FOR COVID-19

**FACT:** Tuob or steam inhalation does not kill the coronavirus that causes COVID-19, according to DOH. The World Health Organization (WHO) also stresses that it does not prevent you from catching the virus and it may be harmful as there’s a high risk for burn injury. On the other hand, the Philippine Medical Association stated that it might facilitate the virus’s aerosolization and contamination of nearby objects. It may offer relief to the person but it unduly increases the risk of the virus spread and transmission to nearby individuals or surfaces. Therefore, tuob or steam inhalation may cause relief of respiratory symptoms of COVID-19 however, it does not prevent and cure the virus.



## ONLY OLD PEOPLE COULD CONTRACT COVID

**FACT:** World Health Organization emphasized that older people and younger people can be infected by the COVID-19 virus. While older people and those who have immunocompromised systems and underlying medical conditions seem to have a higher risk of contracting the virus and having serious complications, the COVID-19 virus can affect anyone at any age.



## COVID IS JUST LIKE A FLU

**FACT:** COVID-19 is not the same as influenza (flu). Although Influenza (Flu) and COVID-19 have similar symptoms and are contagious respiratory illnesses, they are caused by different viruses. COVID is caused by the SARS-COV2 virus while influenza from influenza viruses. COVID is more contagious than the flu as people still don’t have pre-existing immunity to the coronavirus. The effects of COVID-19 are also more lethal than diagnosed flu cases. In terms of long-term effects, COVID-19 survivors report many more long-term effects of the infection than influenza survivors. Even after COVID 19, symptoms such as shortness of breath, trouble focusing and kidney problems are much more common than after influenza.



## COVID-19 VACCINES CAN TURN PEOPLE INTO ZOMBIES

**FACT:** The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirms that the vaccines are safe and effective. There are no reports on people turning into zombies or presenting with cannibalism characteristics after being vaccinated. As of today, several vaccines are now in use with at least 7 different vaccines, according to WHO. In fact, over 126 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine were administered in the United States from December 2020 up to date. Common side effects include swelling, redness, pain at the injection site, fever, headache, tiredness, muscle pain, chills and nausea. A small number of people have severe allergic reactions but CDC assured that this is extremely rare and can be treated with medicine. In the Philippines, data from the Department of Health and the National Task Force reports that there are already 508,332 individuals who were vaccinated as of March 23.

## GASOLINE CAN DISINFECT FACE MASKS



**FACT:** No evidence can prove that gasoline can be used as a disinfectant. According to the Integrated Chemists of the Philippines (ICP), gasoline can not be used as a disinfectant for it has harmful effects especially when inhaled. Breathing small amounts of gasoline vapors can lead to nose and throat irritation, headaches, dizziness, nausea, vomiting and breathing difficulties. Being exposed to large amounts may also lead to coma or death.



# UCSM Students study on Kuhol's potential medicinal properties, wins APMC regional research competition

IRIS MARIE ANTONIO

**Student researchers from the University of Cebu School of Medicine led by Mark Johnuel Duavis found that compounds extracted from golden apple snail (locally known as kuhol) may prevent angiogenesis and have components that may be used for anti-cancer treatment.**

Angiogenesis is defined as the formation of new vasculature from existing blood vessels. While the formation of new blood vessels is good, excessive formation may lead to detrimental effects. This can lead to diseases such as retinopathy, liver cirrhosis, psoriasis and cancer. Judah Folkman introduced anti-angiogenic therapy in the 1970s. His concept is to starve cancer by cutting them off from the blood supply. Since then, an array of anti-angiogenic drugs have been developed, used, and approved to treat cancer.

The study by Duavis and team entitled "Anti-angiogenic activity of Pomacea Canaliculata Lam. (Golden Apple Snail) Extract using in ovo Chick Chorioallantoic Membrane (CAM) Assay" showed that among the six extract fractions from the golden apple snail extract, three demonstrated high properties in inhibiting the length and branching of the vessels. The three fractions had the same activity as retinoic acid, a known compound capable of inhibiting vascular growth. Furthermore, the researchers also found out that sterols are the main biochemical compound contributing to the anti-angiogenic activity as they were consistently present on all three fractions of the golden apple snail extracts during biochemical screening.

## Coming up with the Study

Duavis attributes his group mates M.J Zurbito and M.M Susaya, a pharmacist and biologist, respectively, to the coming up of this study. According to Duavis, the two found an interesting paper by Luay et al. (2018) about the anti-angiogenic potential of a marine molluscan species. "It was the both of them that made great strides to make all of these possible. Bimby's (we call Zurbito that way) ample working experience with anti-angiogenic studies and Mai's (Maris Susaya) experimental research acumen were an unbeatable combination, to begin with", said Duavis.

## On Challenges of the Study

"Exhausting was truly an understatement". Admittedly, Duavis said that there were many challenges that their group faced during their research but emphasized three: time, materials, and money. Juggling between classes, lab activities and personal lives was a challenge that they even stayed as late as 10 pm at the biochemistry or microbiology department. They also had a hard time transporting and harvesting the snails and eggs. Apart from that, they also have to go to two outside laboratories (the University of San Carlos and Cebu Doctors' University) to perform some experiments. With all these, a hefty amount of money is needed to acquire the materials and supplies.

## Anti Cancer Treatment and Farm Pests Solution

According to Duavis, the study's most important contribution is that it will have to pave way for further studies on the anti-angiogenic potential of *P. canaliculata* extract and hopefully

jumpstart a new era of finding novel, potent and effective anti-cancer treatments much like that of bevacizumab. Duavis further expounds: "Aside from the benefit to the field of medicine, we hope that this will significantly benefit the agricultural and economic aspect of our Filipino farmers whose produce have long been burdened by these pests. We truly hope that the study's findings will transcend not just in medicine but in agroeconomics as well."

The study bagged 1st place during the 5th Central Visayas Health Research & Innovation Conference held last November 16-20, 2020 and the 9th APMC-SN Regional Convention Medical Student Research Competition. Co-authors of Duavis are Mary Mariz Susaya, Mark Joseph Zurbito, Trisha Nichole Mae Roxas, Flordelis Enjambre, Fatima Jane Paulene Gade, Antonio Rafael Binosa and Lenberg Sabroso. When asked regarding his experience as a researcher, Duavis stated,

"It is fulfilling, but it is rather humbling most of the time. While the ecstasy of being accepted for publication or presentation is beyond describable, it is not always the case. I could not count how many times I was heartbroken and frustrated because of research. I would often spend many sleepless nights preparing and revising my manuscript, only to be rejected by receiving journals or turned down by competition committees. Aside from being technically complex, this field truly requires you to be mentally and emotionally receptive to criticisms."



SCAN OR TO SEE COPY OF RESEARCH POSTER

# A Day in the Life: A Backtrack to Mid-Pandemic 2020

PATRIZIA NICOLE RODRIGUEZ

Some of it may be a fad, but some of it stayed as an essential part of our lives. The 2020 global pandemic did not only pose a threat to public health but has brought about such dramatic effects on our society at large and in many aspects of our personal lives as well. As we patiently waded out the pandemic in the comforts of our humble home, sometime around in the middle of 2020, back in a sunny afternoon as you scroll through your Facebook newsfeed with your phone, try to reminisce back what thingamajig got your attention, sparked your interest, and kept you busy.



1

## Food, glorious food

With malls, food establishments, and local karenderyas closing for an indefinite period, we have been forced to recreate and experiment our way into satisfying our taste buds with our own cooking. Coffee-lovers, in particular, have resorted to making the ever-instagrammable Korean Dalgona Coffee, which is best paired with the soft and chewy Ube Cheese Pandesal or the classic Basque Burnt Cheesecake. Also, Cebuanos wouldn't forget the controversial Binignit sale during Holy Week. Personally, a blessing that came along with 2020 is the concept of deconstructing the Japanese maki into a pan-sized one either for solo or shared consumption with the family. With local businesses booming offering different flavors to our palate, Baked Sushi is here to stay post-pandemic. Lastly, when it comes to oil-less healthy cooking at home, Air Fryers have been a kitchen must-have, particularly during the holidays.

## Add to cart, now.

Pre-pandemic online shopping platforms have already set their solid footing in our monthly budget allocation. Guilty as charged! With every business going online, even social media platforms (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, Instagram) were digitally reconstructed to offer ads, data analysis, and marketing services. Transactions that require physical face-to-face contact have now evolved to strive by virtual meeting and interacting with clients & customers online. Since then, digital commerce has been carrying the global economy on its shoulders as soon as borders of countries worldwide closed down. By this time, understanding how health and life insurance, free shipping, cashbacks, vouchers, and even a simple "pamine po!" from a livestream unboxing works is the new digital financial literacy.

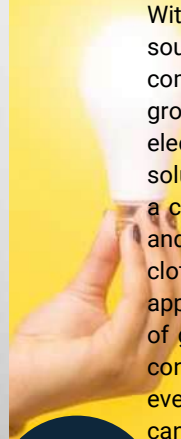
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## A traditional solution to a modern problem

With everybody on lockdown, our incoming source of cash has been very limited compared to our growing need for groceries, medical supplies, and electronics for online classes. As a solution, most Filipinos openly engaged in a centuries-old method of bartering goods and services. From trading ordinary books, clothing, and bags into gadgets or kitchen appliances to exchanging thousands worth of groceries into motorcycles, sports cars, condo units, titled houses and lots, and even a private island – there is nothing that cannot be bartered!

3





**4 For the moms and titas-at-heart out there**

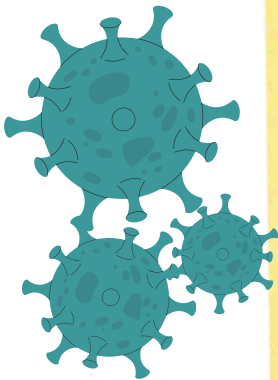


Being in an indefinite lockdown, why not isolate yourself in style? Room makeover tutorials that are budget-friendly had been buzzing left and right from moms and thrift shoppers sharing tricks up their sleeves. Turns out, redecorating and reorganizing our rooms have been shown to relax and soothe our anxious souls brought about by the uncertainty of the pandemic's course at the time. One can transform an ordinary sleeping quarter into a boho chic-themed haven or a dream gaming room from stackable storage boxes to foam wallpapers and even simple woodworking and DIY paint jobs.

**Five seconds till the enemy reaches the battlefield, smash them!  
All troops deployed!**

Got a fever, headache, insomnia, stiff neck, or stomach acidity from skipping meals? A wise mother might say, "kaka-cellphone mo yan!". Multiplayer games have been a great way to bond with our friends and family and even meet people around the world. These games include Mobile Legends, Among Us, Animal Crossing, and Call of Duty Mobile. With the rise of the digital world of entertainment, the possibilities have been limitless for those who have been passionate about their gaming experience. Gamers can now earn from live streaming and game vlogging. For those who want to take advantage of the hiatus and relax their mind away, Netflix, Kdramas, Youtube vlogs, and other streaming apps have been the go-to pandemic remedies.

**5 Big YYY for the environment!**



Somehow, the coronavirus itself is the earth's vaccine, and sadly, we humans are sometimes the virus. The environment did breathe a little as countries imposed intensive lockdown restrictions. In the Philippines, plantitas and plantitos emerged from celebrities and ordinary citizens as they teach the young the importance of growing one's fruits and vegetables from their backyard. Successively, the drop in the presence of public transportation, plus expensive fares, led to the rise of bicycles and cycling enthusiasts all over the country as an alternative means of traveling and getting around for work or leisure. Filipinos also started preferring natural, eco-friendly products from homegrown shops. Part of the growing trend includes eco refilling shops, menstrual cups, cloth diapers, bamboo straws and utensils, and biodegradable packaging.

**6**



**7**

**From the top, make it pop, and 2020, that's a wrap!**

With its launching back in 2018, Tiktok easily surpassed Facebook, Instagram, Youtube & Snapchat in its monthly installs per device. However, it wasn't until mid-pandemic that we could fully appreciate Tiktok's influence not only on digital entertainment but also in digital education and journalism. To some, Tiktok has been the way and the life. Great content makers could even profit from their uploads. But for several people, dancing to challenges and singing duets on TikTok, and even scrolling down to discover more about the outside world are some means to escape the problems of reality. Thus, to enjoy the simple moments of laughter worth sharing in those short Tiktok entries, to which our very own Tiktok fan, Dr. Narciso Tapia (@narcisotapia1), can attest.

Indeed, the worldwide lockdown was a make-or-break time for us. In the first few months, there were many uncertainties as to when the lockdown restrictions would be lifted or how the course of the pandemic would go. Not one part of the globe was left unscathed by COVID-19 and its socioeconomic repercussions. Furthermore, the changes brought about by the quarantine may not be equally dramatic to some people while crucial and significant to many others. Given the months' worth of spare time we had in our hands during the quarantine period, what matters



# Student Council x DASIG x AXE Presents: Students' Night 2020

PATRIZIA NICOLE RODRIGUEZ

In place of the annual Med Games, a traditional showcase of talent & sportsmanship, the first-ever virtual Students' Night was held last Oct. 31, 2020. To culminate the Mental Health Month, the UCSM Student Council, in collaboration with DASIG & AXE, the Students' Night culminated the month-long campaign for Mental Health Awareness. The heart of the gathering was not only to reconnect with friends and fellow student doctors but, more importantly, to welcome and forge new friendships with the recent addition to the UCSM family, Batch Cinctus

The event involved activities that encouraged all participants to speak their minds and share their talents with the student body. Traditionally, Red, Blue, Gold, and White teams were composed of a representative set of students from all year levels. The team colors were dispersed into breakout rooms to meet their new members from Batch Cinctus and rekindle old flames with their comrades from previous Med Games. All participants had a chance to share a few things about themselves with the group and ended their turn by answering thought-provoking, no-holds-barred questions such as "If you were a type of food, how would you like to be eaten and why?" A batch Cinctus fellow answered hilariously and made the entire room break into laughter.

The highlight of the night was in another breakout session. This time, it was a "Battle of the Batches" trivia game via Quizizz, with Batch Cinctus garnering the most points. The Council, DASIG, and AXE prepared other exciting activities, including a virtual bring-me game, emoji games, TikTok competition, scavenger hunt, and intermission numbers from UCSM Got Talent.

What a night indeed! The event started as a simple virtual party but brought the ever-expanding UCSM family closer together. Despite the piling backlogs of materials to read, schoolwork to submit, and upcoming dreaded long exams, Direwolves still know how to have a great time.



SPONSORS:



## FUN FOR A CAUSE

# CAUSE

Ticket

MA. CHERRY ANN GORGONIO

Who says you can't help while having fun?

Despite the pandemic, AXE conducted activities that were fun and at the same time helped fund its future outreach and medical missions. These were Raffle for a Cause and Tournament for a Cause. For the Raffle for a Cause, raffle tickets were sold at Php 100 per ticket from April 19, 2021 to May 1, 2021. Prizes for the raffle included a Littmann Classic III Stethoscope for the 1st prize, Hydro Flask 16oz for the 2nd Prize, and an Air Humidifier for the 3rd prize. During the Grand

Draw, the winners were Ivy Monique Low for the 1st prize, Eric Jhon Auguis won the 2nd prize and Christian Fortuna got the 3rd prize.

The Tournament for a Cause featured the famous Mobile Legends game in a winner takes all tournament. Each of the team was required a registration of Php 500 with the Grand Prize of Php 5000. The tournament had 16 teams and started on April 30, 2021. The Grand Finals was streamed online through Facebook last May 8, 2021. Team STP and Team Aron & Friends competed in the Grand Finals where both teams showed excellent prowess in the game. But Team STP emerged victorious in the last round and won the Grand Prize.

These activities show that even in a pandemic, people can still have fun at the safety of their homes and help those who are on the fringes of society.





The COVID-19 pandemic has shifted many lives as we know it. We now dawn ourselves on the reality of fully transitioning into the new normal which, hopefully, gears us toward a robust and better future — the kind of normal that transcends the challenges of the present while putting one's peace and safety in the front line.

# HUMANS OF UCSM

In every crisis, the majority of people cling to one word - Resilience. Although we often feature this human character, we do not wish to tread on the path of romanticizing this over finding the real solutions to today's problems. We emphasize it as a virtue to remember during hard times: when circumstances are not direct consequences of our choices, and when we are facing the unexpected. The Serviant gives you personal stories of resilience by humans of the University of Cebu School of Medicine.

# FAILURE: NOT AN END BUT A TEMPORARY

JEHDAIAH JANE NEMEÑO

DETOUR →

“

Often in life, we see failure as a negative thing. True enough, our society cherishes success as if it is what defines a person. It is a common misconception that to achieve success, we must avoid failure and that both cannot, in any way, coexist. But looking at life in a bigger picture, this notion is highly refutable. It is undeniable that failure plays a crucial role in every success story if only people learn from it. Few of our fellow medical students from UCSM who have experienced this feat gladly share their stories: that amidst the struggle, they chose not to give up.

”

It was January 2018, the first day in school after the Christmas break. I opened the small piece of paper which said "FAILED" and the next thing I knew, I was on the 2nd floor of the Medical Arts Building. The floor was empty that day which was fortunate for me because I started crying. I remember feeling very sad, ashamed, and frustrated.

I was able to cope with the help of my family and my friends, who hugged me and made time to cheer me up and encourage me. It was this time when I asked myself if becoming a doctor was what I really wanted to do for the rest of my life because I did not want my parents to spend money when I was not even sure. During my time as an irregular student, it was an opportunity to think about this. It was when I learned to appreciate the "art" of Medicine and decided to continue.

I have learned to prioritize the most important details when studying. Although every piece of information in medical books is important, I can't finish everything, so I focus on the more essential details. Although it may not work for everybody, I also take down notes during lectures. I don't write down everything. I try to filter out the more critical details, like those stressed out and repeated during lectures. More importantly, I read on cases encountered in the clinics because I can retain more information by correlating what I read and what the patient manifested, what diagnostics were ordered, and what medications were given.

There were so many times I would say, "I've had enough. I'm giving up already!" Honestly, I still do. But while learning Medicine, I have learned to love it. It is an "art" as described by many doctors- the way we can communicate with patients, ask them how they are feeling, then see them get better after they are given medications or after their surgeries. We learn a lot in medical school, it's true, but we gain knowledge so much more from the patients we meet.



Liaia B. Enolpe

- Batch Tritonos

The struggles then and now are pretty much the same - studying for cases, failing or passing quizzes and exams. The difference is that as an irregular student, I had more time to study and focus on the subjects I failed but still have time to spend with my family and friends. With clinical clerkship, you never know what cases you will encounter, you need to be the one to extract the history and PE, and it needs to be done in less than 30 minutes because the write-up will be due in 2 hours and the formulation, in 24 hours.

My medical journey was very tough - I was lost, sad, got sick multiple times, had to go through a lot. I've always heard that Medicine is not easy, but I did not expect it to drain me too much- physically, mentally, and emotionally. But it was happy, memorable, and at the same time, I learned a lot.

*"I am thankful I did not give up with the help of my blockmates, batchmates, friends, and family."*

Now in my last year of medical school, I still feel like most of the time I know too little, but it is an achievement because I never thought I'd get this far. It's okay not to know "everything," even during endorsements we are told to say if we know the answer to the consultants' and residents' questions. If we don't, we read on these things, and we get to learn another new thing. Through time, we will have learned many new things.

A doctor should be curious because a detailed history and physical examination can almost always help clinch the diagnosis; Compassionate to your patients because you are not only treating them, you are also learning from them; and Resilient because you will have to go through a lot - physically, mentally and emotionally.

To other med students who are struggling, my advice would be: Take a moment to pause and think if this is what you can imagine yourself doing for the rest of your life. I remember our freshman orientation by Batch Primoris back in 2016. A piece of advice I'll never forget is to always go back to why you took up Medicine and hold on to it. This will get you through the tough times. In my case, the moment I realized that becoming a doctor was so much more than a childhood dream was the moment I learned to "love" and "commit" to Medicine. When things get too overwhelming, stop worrying about the future and focus on what you need to do now, and take each day at a time.

My past experiences have constantly reminded me to do my best in whatever I do, not just because I don't want to fail subjects but also because we will be dealing with people's lives, and I don't want to fail them in the future.





*Leniel John Baligasa*

- Batch Tritonos

Medicine has always been a dream of mine since childhood. Weirdly, I really enjoyed being inside hospitals when I was young, even though being there would mean someone close is sick enough to warrant admission. Of course, there were times when I thought that it was just a silly dream. You see, I am not from a wealthy family, and studying Medicine here in our country is a family decision. It is something that only the affluent could achieve. But fortunately enough, I, being here, did not take too much toll on my family, and I am grateful for that.

My first year was fun. I am so into making friends, and so that was my goal for the first few weeks of my Level 1. And make friends I did; they made the load of adjusting to a new environment easier in every aspect. For struggles, I don't really remember much by now. Having experienced the subsequent higher levels has made whatever I went through my first year a little puny. But yes, the need to adjust to a more pressurized environment, living alone away from my family and the almost unhealthy competitiveness of the people around me made it significantly harder.

Saying that I felt bad, guilty, and embarrassed towards my parents when I learned that I failed, is an understatement. I knew beforehand that I would fail a subject. It was in the back of my head months before the verdict was released, so it didn't shock me as much. I had told my parents about the possibility of failing a subject months before. However, what irked me is that I managed to pass the subject that I was apprehensive about and failed a different one.

I didn't cry, though. I knew how much effort I gave for that year, and I knew it wasn't enough, so I didn't beat myself up from an opportunity I let pass. I just slept it off.

It has always been a part of my nature as a person to give up on things fast. I would have no qualms or hesitations when the feeling to do it arises. Medicine is not an exception, but what made me stay is the fact that I am in love with the practice, and there are these little moments, little things about it, that make me fall in love with it even more.

I would like to think that I have now become more responsible. I tried different approaches and modifications to how I spend my day to maximize my time for learning without sacrificing time for enough sleep. I believe sleep is the purest reward I can give my brain and body after a long day at school. I also changed how I think about my readings. I stopped seeing them as a form of a stressor and started treating them as a way to go forward. It takes a lot of self-convincing, I should say. I've made many mistakes and questionable decisions, but they have led me to where I am now, to the person I am now. I wouldn't be here without the people who are always there to support me.

I can't really point out a single struggle I felt being an irregular medical student. I ended up with an awesome, very welcoming batch, and assimilating with them went so naturally. Having the opportunity to be their batch president for a year made me grow as a leader, as a student, and as a person. That experience probably affected my present life—

***"I became more outspoken, more confident, inquisitive, curious, and responsible."***

Compassion, patience, and a bit of timely wit. These are essential characters a physician should have.

To finally be in the last year of medical school feels great and very fulfilling. It is definitely a struggle, but being around the right kind of people and learning from some of the best educators made the journey enjoyable.

To the medical students who are struggling and doubting to continue, it will not be an easy journey. As they say, anything worth having is worth fighting for. It is a fight, not a struggle — a fight between you and your limitations. Extend that. Modify that. Your experiences here will teach you how to do just that. Speak more in public. Expose yourself little by little. Do you freeze when you get asked to? I still have that, but I'm still fighting. Do you miss your family? Living alone? Call them. Talk to them. Pull strength and inspiration from that. Can't understand a topic? Ask for help. You have good people around you. Are you failing a subject? Talk to your doctor mentors. They will listen. Never lose sight of the reason why you chose Medicine in the first place. The road before you may not be clear but just take that next step.

Medical school is a tough road. It requires students to effectively manage their stress, overcome the challenges they face every day, and navigate through the ups and downs of the journey. Failing medical school is probably one of every medical student's greatest fear. It is because it is not anticipated, and no one is prepared for it. But failure is NOT final; it is only a detour towards our dreams.

Life stories like these are so heart-warming, mainly because many of us can relate. We have somehow, some time in our lives, encountered failures, but this is where we get to make a very crucial decision: whether we end dreaming or we continue pursuing. Failure is an inevitable part of life, but it is up to us to make it a platform to step forward closer to our dreams. As one doctor has said, "If viewed through the constructive lens of self-improvement, we need not cushion its blow to self-esteem." It is essential to learn from it and develop perseverance and steadfastness, knowing that the reward that awaits couldn't be much sweeter in the end. After all, as the adage goes, the best success stories often begin with failure.



# Defeating COVID-19

JOSHMARY DENICE SAPLAD  
NEUVILLE FLORINTH LUCRESE ABENIS

## Anchored on Hope

Story by Anonymous

It was evening when I found out that I tested positive for COVID-19. I was so shocked and scared because I did not know what to do. I cried all night. The next day, while waiting for health officials to transfer me to an isolation facility, I was constantly pressured by some people to leave my place and be transferred immediately. I felt discriminated against by some people surrounding me. Instead of the sympathy and comfort that I longed for, I felt unloved, abandoned, judged by their glare, and treated as an outcast. At 10 pm on that cold rainy night, I got transported in an ambulance, alone and afraid. So many negative thoughts entered my mind. I even questioned God, "Why me of all people?" I was filled with anxiety, doubts, and fears.

In the facility, God opened my eyes by looking through His perspective. As I saw other patients, I also felt their pain, sadness, hopelessness, and desperation to get healed. Yet they stayed strong for their families. I realized the importance of the impact of doctors and other healthcare personnel on people in their lowest situations. When I told my family and closest friends about my condition, they were worried because I was alone in Cebu. In my loneliness and despair, I turned to God, my Creator, and waited for Him. I read my bible and spent more time with Him. Indeed, He answered our prayers and redeemed me from COVID-19. I was discharged from the facility and finally got the freedom that I have been praying hard for.

The experience made me realize many things and awakened me to what matters. We cannot control our life — only God, the giver of life can. God is constant and His love never changes throughout all seasons. When my life was out of control, I learned to trust God more, relying on His plans and perfect timing. Even though there were times that I have taken God for granted, not once did He forsake me. He became my best friend and greatest companion.

My COVID-19 journey was God's way of bringing me closer to Him by experiencing His unconditional love and redeeming grace. My faith in Him has helped me to become more resilient. During those trying times, He was the anchor who held me in place. He kept me from crumbling into pieces. I surrendered myself and allowed Him to take control of my life. And He made me endure and thrive above impossible things that are beyond my strength.

Today I still get anxious, even depressed, about the things around me but knowing whom to trust fully gives me peace. Uncertainties are ways to redirect our focus on the most valuable things — i.e. our relationship towards our God and His people. Loneliness makes us realize that no one and nothing can satisfy us but His presence alone. Trials and challenges strengthen our hope that He is sovereign above all. God is my protector and shield, my comfort and hope. I praise the Lord Almighty for all that He has done in the past, present, and even in the future.

## Healthcare Shouldn't be a Privilege

Story by  
Cres Van Bayhanon

I started having symptoms on Valentine's day. I had a cold early that morning, but I disregarded it and thought it was probably the usual allergies. The fever started at noon. I decided to rest instead of studying because I thought it was just stress from my lack of sleep that caused it. I noticed at dinner that I cannot smell or taste anything. And that was when I realized that I probably have COVID-19. I decided to seek medical attention on Tuesday, Feb 16, and went to different hospitals for a checkup. When I was finally checked, my physician told me that I had "probable COVID pneumonia" and that I had to confirm this impression via RT-PCR. I got swabbed in a government center three days later and found out I was positive with COVID on Sunday, Feb 21, 1 week after my first symptoms came out. I did not expect to catch COVID since I seldom go out of my condominium, just like the past few months. The LGU representatives came to our house, informed my family that we were officially under home quarantine, then placed a cordon tape at our door. I coped up with the quarantine period through my friends. They were always catching up with my condition and checking up on me online. Some video chat or call once in a while. I also just preoccupied myself with light reading non-academic books, the internet, or other stuff as long as it is not exhausting to cause me physical pain since I had muscle aches with my fever.

In these times, I believe open-mindedness is the most valuable virtue. These experiences reminded me how the healthcare system in the Philippines is not yet at its greatest. There are a lot of things to improve on. I am saying this as a patient who got denied care from several institutions even if I can pay. When I go home, I hear reports about famous people or people in positions confined but had fewer symptoms than me. Others might say, "That's reality," but I thought hospitals or healthcare centers, being a place where people are cared for, are supposed to at least make an effort in lessening these injustices. I cannot even begin to imagine what those people who have it worse than me are experiencing in this pandemic. I wonder about those who are sick of COVID but at the same time have problems about what they're going to eat for the day and those who don't have enough money to get themselves treated.

As a future medical doctor, not only did these realizations strengthen my empathy and sympathy, but they also motivated me to contribute to a better world in the future where social injustices are healed and a thing of the past. It's a long shot, but healthcare shouldn't be a luxury or a burden. It should be everyone's right, no matter how rich or poor, no matter how mundane or famous a person is. Everyone deserves equal rights to receive healthcare. I realized that reality could be changed, and it can be changed faster if it is done collectively with cooperation from many people. Honestly, this experience somehow changed how I looked at life. I am thankful to God for making me realize stuff and strengthening my principles despite the condition.







# PRE-PANDEMIC

days back on the high ceilings of the hallways, the last minute reviews at the library, the cool winds of the amphitheater, pizza breaks and samgyup dates.



# PANDEMIC

one pack, one heart, one primoris. Days of hardships, uncertainties but nevertheless, victory. On zoom calls, relief drives and realizing the dream of being the best. The pack remained strong! UCbaya!





# Physicians on Duty

JOSHMARY DENICE SAPLAD

## DR. MERCI ANGELIE LETIGIO UY

As of April 2020, it has been 13 months since I said yes to the calling of being a COVID doctor; 12 months since I treated my first case of COVID.

Until this day, the past year has been an emotional and professional rollercoaster for me, as an adult pulmonologist, tasked by consequence of my subspecialty, and by corollary of my calling as a physician to do my share in helping ease the health consequences of this pandemic. I never say no to rendering medical service. It has been a YES for me from the beginning. I knew I had to do my share. What caught me by surprise was when it reached a point when I, already a consultant, had to voluntarily sign up for COVID ICU duty in UCMed because of healthcare worker burnout amongst our junior consultants and general practitioners at that time. We had to help each other.

Aside from that, I, too, have to play my role in COVID mitigation. If I meet the patient and their family members in the hospital because of unwarranted admission due to COVID then my exact role is in this order: I primarily treat the illness of the patient. Second, I educate the family on the etiology, transmission, and current treatment guidelines for this evolving illness.

But if I meet the patient and the family members in the clinic for a non-COVID related consultation, then my role is in the reverse order: I educate primarily. But, if the patient or the family member still contracts COVID despite that, then I treat.



### Preparations

For me, there were no special preparations, just the basic training from way back in medical school. As a physician in ground zero, I was trained to equip myself with as much knowledge of the dreaded disease as I could find. This knowledge will then serve as my ammunition, to be stored in my armory, my brain, to be used on the battlefield, the hospital. My family also knew it was inevitable that I will be face to face with COVID patients. They never stopped me from serving in the war.

### Teamwork in the wards

It is always "WE" - a complex partnership between me, the general physicians, junior consultants, resident physicians, nurses, and the patient/s, including their family.

**Altogether we cultivate a "CAN WIN" attitude no matter how hard and seemingly impossible the uphill journey is.**

My coworkers (doctors, nurses, utility, etc.) in the COVID ward are the real heroes ("hands down"). They deserve every respect for all that they do for our COVID patients.

### On resilience

My coping, in particular, I could not take credit for. My resilience I primarily learned from my father. Then life has a way of honing it for the better. When things get too exhausting or hectic, I turn to my family as a refuge. Like a dying cell phone battery, my family - my husband, Jeff, and three little boys - serve as my perfect superchargers. I spend a simple moment with them, and I am ready to face the battle again.

### For future doctors

A piece of advice I want to impart to medical doctors is to know how to defeat, or in our case, to not be defeated by the enemy. We need to acquire knowledge, practice what we know, and use it to our advantage. Our profession, unfortunately during this time, deals with sickness. We need to see patients. Seeing and examining them is possible for as long as we follow minimum safety protocols.

### For the public

I humbly suggest *unity* among all sectors in society since we all have a common enemy.

**Be a responsible person.**

Always wear a face mask and follow minimum health safety protocols to curtail the spread of the deadly disease even when no one is watching.





# DR. FIDJI TAMBAGO

When you look at the hands of infectious diseases doctors, our long nails are gone because of hand hygiene. It's most important together with wearing masks and distancing. We have to be more aware of our habits.

The vaccine is just another barrier to prevent you from having a severe infection. It's just an add-on. You can still get infected, so you still have to apply minimum health standards. Adherence to these should already be a habit since it has been a year of practicing them.

It will trickle down to each individual's contribution in helping mitigate this virus, so we must always be mindful.

Even to medical students, you are not immune to the virus. If you know how to protect yourself, you can go about everyday activities while applying health protocols as part of your routine going out if you need to.

## Realizations

This pandemic has brought out the good and the bad within myself, among the medical doctors, and the community. We must dwell on the good and emphasize the importance of working together. We must have a conscious effort thinking about what good we can bring into the community. In the end, everybody is affected. We start with our own; we reach out; avoid conflicts, "Di 'ta magpatakod, di sad 'ta manakod." Focus on what benefits you and the community. And when bad things happen, find what good we can do about it. What good can come out of it? If we become apathetic, how will anything happen?

I want to heal the community. That has always been my calling ever since I entered medical school. I'm just really doing my part as a physician and as an individual. Just do your part. Sometimes, **you really won't know your worth until you are there, deep into hot water.**



*As an infectious diseases specialist, COVID is like any ordinary case for me. It just so happened that COVID caused a pandemic, and it's a new entity with a new set of diseases. So we have to apply the best scientific data there is. We have to always be in the loop, kept abreast with new data and information that we can use to help our patients. The attention just exploded on us in the infectious diseases department because we were already geared to treat. This pandemic has brought out whatever talents we have. We had to be resilient, flexible.*

## Preparations

There were only 15 of us in the COVID team here in Cebu. Our preparations included numerous Zoom meetings with our fellow doctors nationwide, especially with consultants from Manila. We had to do a lot of readings to gather best practices that we can apply. We also had to meet with stakeholders and the LGU to advise the community. We travel from one hospital to the next, UCMed, Chong Hua Hospital, Mactan, even some far provinces, wherever we are needed. The hospital also had to be prepared by opening a whole wing for COVID patients then they had to open another until the hospital had to allocate most rooms to accept COVID patients.

Mentally, emotionally, I was not scared of the virus because we're used to it, but we have to master the basics about the disease and apply it to reinforce what we were already practicing. The new thing here is that we're wearing hazmat suits, but other health protocols like the five moments of hand hygiene are already common sense to us. We must consider every patient as potentially infectious so that we'll know to protect ourselves.

## The challenges

It was most challenging during the first surge of cases early last year 2020 because we were still gathering data, deciding which medication is best. And we were also challenged in procuring them because we have to consider their availability. It's not like we can prescribe over-the-counter drugs. We had to order outside Cebu, and sometimes even outside the country.

Critical patients are most difficult because we are racing against time. When it gets to a level where they experience cytokine storm, it becomes too difficult to turn the situation around. It was a challenge for me because I couldn't break down or rest at that time, no matter what problem we may face.

We were the drivers and workers. It may be scary for us, but we've already been working along the lines with these kinds of cases, doing what is currently being practiced in dealing with COVID, therefore it is our moral obligation and social responsibility.

The surge of cases settled down during Christmas time. That was a breathing period for us. But then during the holiday, we expected another surge. I believe we are on the 2nd wave of infection in Cebu in February.

## Teamwork in the ward

In the hospital wards, the camaraderie is there. We express ourselves as we are, no matter what the situation is. There are battles we have to fight alone, and there are specific problems we need to face together. Most doctors are familiar with each other. We help each other out and work together. We have been battling this for a year already.

**Honestly, I'm tired, but it's what we took oath for – to help these patients.**

Individually, we are also trying to mitigate the rise of the cases. We don't want this infection to get way out of hand affecting our loved ones. We are always careful every time we approach any patient.

## Finding rest

Similar to students, I give myself time off work. I provide a breather for my sanity. I do whatever makes me feel relaxed for a few hours. I allot time to myself not doing COVID stuff to forget for a while, but we know it's always there. My family members, being non-medical, were apprehensive about having me work face to face against the virus, but they understand. I feel at ease seeing my family well, being able to converse with them and my friends. Sometimes I go out and have dinner together with my friends in medicine and with hospital coworkers. We discuss our personal lives outside COVID.

## Mutations and Vaccines

The COVID mutations or variants are not different viruses. They will still cause COVID. We have to enforce and practice the same minimum health standards that we've already been taught. We can't ask the government to shut down the economy. Reinforce education. Reinforce protocols. Remind everyone to be careful, disciplined and responsible individuals.

There's no 100% assurance on the treatment to stop the COVID surge. We apply the Swiss cheese model that not all standards are fully effective unless we collectively give effort. The virus is exposed to a lot of medications. The public's goal is simply to avoid getting infected to avoid intermingling the virus. We have to understand the analogy behind the transmission of the virus so we can mitigate it efficiently.

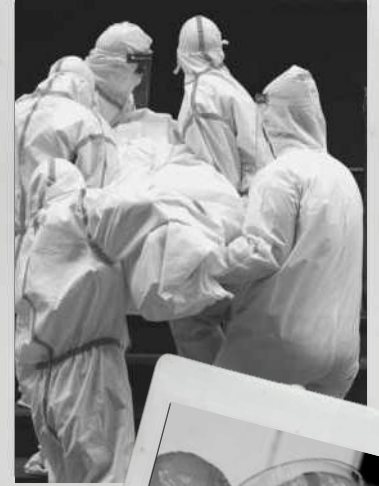


# Letters to Rona

YENCE SHAIRA FARIOLA

The COVID-19 pandemic is not playing out in the same way from person to person. Maybe staying the whole quarantine period with the family was an excellent time for bonding, but a miserable one for those with separated or abusive parents. Having online classes would perhaps make some students feel comfortable with their sturdy study tables with laptops on, but a difficult one for those who do not even have access to the fast internet connection. This time has been a massive opportunity for other small online businesses, but a significant fall to others' profit.

It was hard to find a unique pandemic story. It was as if everyone has the right to be heard. As what our professor said, "Every human being, from his gross anatomy up to his genetic information, is unique." – so as our experiences. Everyone has the right to voice out and tell "Miss Rona" what they feel. We may not be able to pen down everything, but we are fortunate to note some:



*Dear Miss Rona,*

I hope you go away already. You crashed everyone's party. Although you abruptly shifted our year, you opened our eyes to the importance of health, our community frontliners, as well as good governance. If there is anything we should thank you for, it is by helping us realize that our national health system and its infrastructures needed saving."

-Dharrence of Batch Cinctus, a registered Medical Technologist who had the chance to volunteer to a renowned public hospital in the city.

*Dear Miss Rona,*

I am in the province right now, and it is challenging, especially when attending an online class. When the school year started in September last year, I have checked different locations to find the perfect spot with a stable internet connection: I went to an upland area, in the middle of a farm, near the seaside, and to my friends' houses. Sometimes, I feel like I still attend the "normal" classes because I wake up 2 hours before the scheduled class to get ready and head to the location where there are fewer interruptions. If only I could write all my complaints to you Rona, maybe I already gave you lists. It is hard to appreciate you. But you know what, there is ONE thing that I am grateful for, it is the TIME you gave me that I can spend with my parents. It is a blessing for me. Rona, you made me realize how life can be so short and quickly be taken away. That is why I am making the most out of this time with my loved ones.

Lastly, I continue to thank God for giving me the time to think about what matters, to realize the meaning of health and life, to appreciate what we all have that we can share with those who need it most, and time for us to keep going because we have a future to protect. I keep on hoping and praying for this pandemic to end and live life like we used to. Just like any challenges, I know this too shall pass. Hopefully soon.

- Alexis Gene of Batch Kairos, seen most connected with nature during Zoom meetings.





## Dear Miss Rona,

You took not only one but five of my loved ones during this challenging time, making it even harder for us. We cannot give a comforting hug to one another. We saw everyone's tears rolling through the screens of our phones. It was a hard feeling of not being there physically to share our grief. It was as if memories had flashed back, and we felt guilty for not treasuring the moments we once had - overlooking the gratefulness of receiving a hug and seeing someone smile without any mask hiding it."

-Yence of Batch Cinctus, a first-year student who braved herself through medical school despite losing her beloved amid the pandemic.

## Dear Miss Rona,

Our healthcare workers, students, grocery store workers, children, mothers, mass transit workers, and other essential laborers need respite more than ever. We respect and realize that you come here to teach us something. We understand that we can no longer be who we have been. We are learning to be better, more compassionate while not compromising what is right. We realize the importance of our loved ones and how unimportant petty grievances and resentments are. You teach us to tap into our hidden potentials, and that laziness does not serve us any good. We, the citizens of the world, have so much to learn from you. Regardless, we will remain steadfast to rise as a global healing community.

-Ryla Yu, Batch Cinctus

## Dear Miss Rona,

You stole the 5-year dream that I had since the first day of college. I was expectantly waiting for the moment where I will be walking toward the stage and can finally say that I made it."

-Jeferson of Batch Cinctus, a 2020 graduate who did not have the chance to march at his college graduation ceremony.

## Dear Miss Rona,

Despite me hating you, I acknowledge your impeccable timing; without you I would have not been able to slow down and spend my father's last month with him - time I would not trade for anything. Although you've certainly made grieving lonesome and a thousand times harder now that we are stuck at home. I'm still thankful that I get to continue my medical education all the while spending time with my family, which I admittedly have taken for granted. I thought I was already patient, but you proved me otherwise; I thought I was a kind and understanding person, but you spat on those too; you tore down the 4 corners of the room I was in and made me see I was out-of-touch with reality. Still, I won't say thank you because these do not erase the fact that you've single-handedly brought down people to their knees mercilessly. A lot have sacrificed and countless still sacrificing to fight against you; and despite the exhaustion, we will never give up. Miss Rona, you have overstayed your welcome. Bye now.

-Kissler Romarate, Batch Invictus

After all, it seems pertinent to say that we hope for the immediate departure of Miss Rona. If you have the chance to send her a farewell letter, what would it be?





# Opportunities amidst Adversities

YENCE SHAIRA FARIOLA

"This pandemic hit us really hard together with my coworkers & the doctors. We do not know what would happen during those days, how we should do this and that, and make the new normal online class possible. We need to study & learn new things, like how to operate the Google Classroom, how to do the Canvas for the examinations, to Zoom so that the doctors can teach their lessons & activities, to communicate with the students without seeing them in person, just through online."

"This year, the online classes changed our job differently, and it's a challenge for us to do right now because it's usually the things I don't do - like always facing a computer during the class, making some recordings or posting schedules, exams, etc. That's why I also prefer the actual class over the online because I miss seeing groups of students na mag saba saba, studying & cramming before the exam. And also, it's so quiet here in school and gipul-an na ko motan-aw sa akong mga coworkers. I need new faces to see! Haha just kidding! I am really excited to see the students next semester. Because of this new normal, I realize that we should always be prepared because we do not know what would happen tomorrow; be open to whatever changes will come. And also support/assist your coworkers/doctors as much as possible, so it makes the job easier."



**MISS ADELFA LOZADA**- the ever active and passionate laboratory technician of the UCSM Department of Anatomy & Histology, for four years. She is one of the first names you will be familiar with, especially during lectures whenever the doctors are experiencing technical difficulties. She also communicates with the students and makes sure that they got the news and recorded lectures on time.

"There are a lot of challenges that I encounter in my work, just like when students tell bad things about me or towards me. In this field of work, you need to be more patient. Some people don't understand the effort that you put into your work. But also, part of my job that excites me most is when I'm able to help students process their documents and most especially to become part of their journey to succeed in their studies and when they smile. I had this experience when the lockdown happened when no one can directly go out to go to the market and go to work. That was a processing period for the Batch Concordia, and they needed copies of their Transcript of Records for their post-graduate internship. My job is to provide that. But the files are on my computer in the office. But thank God I brought my USB that time, and when I checked, the copies of their Transcripts were in there. I want to share that we must always secure backups just in case something happens like this pandemic. During my experience working here, you need to be more patient, understanding, kind, and most especially, thankful for the opportunity to help people. It changes the way I discipline my daughters. I learn a lot of things in life. Not to be perfect but to reach out to people who need help."



**MISS MAECHELLE FEGI-MASONG**, a former working student of the University of Cebu back in college. She was formerly an ESL teacher before she was given a chance to work for UCSM. Now, she has been our kind, helpful, and dynamic Registrar-in-charge for four years. She's one of the people working in the background tirelessly to help us organize our enrollments and, ultimately, help us achieve our goals up to residency.

"In my previous job, I was a Team Leader on a non-voice BPO Company. I was there for more than a year. But the company didn't last long for some major problems. Then one of my friends referred me to work in UCSM, so I tried to apply, and luckily I was accepted. With this kind of pandemic, I experienced a financial problem. I guess all of us, not just an employee in UC but all of the people working on a company. We experienced skeletal schedule, where only a few staff are required to duty. And that really affected our monthly income. So far, I don't have any exact realizations that I reflected in my daily life. But all I can say is that we don't really know what the future is in store for us, so better yet, just make the most out of it."

**MR. JERALD ADOLFO**, who we mostly see during exams as a proctor whenever the doctors are not around. He is also one of the first names we heard when we got accepted to the program, to whom we sent our pictures and concerns about the online set-up. He has been in UCSM for more than four years as an IT Support and a Laboratory Technician in Biochemistry and Physiology Department.





# Atty. Go — Dreaming With Conviction

JOSHMARY DENICE SAPLAD

The man that launched dreams — Atty. Go humbly prefers to be called an educator. Who wouldn't, when there is a University of Cebu (UC) graduate everywhere in the world. Somewhere in Cebu, there's a student struggling, dreaming to have a college degree, and the person most suited to help him/her is the man of UC himself, Atty. Augusto W. Go.

You can hear in his voice a hint of giddiness and pride of a father seeing his children all successful. But actually, he only has one child, a daughter, Miss Candice Gotianuy, an equally brilliant Harvard graduate and Chancellor of the University of Cebu. Evident in his encounters, Atty. Go never forgets to mention his love and awe to Miss Candice, even jokingly announcing that she is single. For Atty. Go, it is mostly her daughter's hard work and excellence that brought UC to where it is now. His main contribution, he said, was that he borrowed money from the bank whenever it was needed.

His other children, aside from the UC graduates, are the schools he has built so far. The colossal growth from being Cebu College of Commerce, belittled by many in 1964, into being the largest privately-owned university with different UC schools in the present, including the University of Cebu School of Medicine in synergy with the University of Cebu Medical Center. Each school proved its excellence during licensure exams, especially our very own recent Physician Licensure Exam in November and March, with UCSM garnering a 100% passing rate and producing a 3rd placer, Cy Johann Kent Romuga, M.D. All these were made possible by Miss Candice and Atty. Go's initiative and no-holding-back support for the schools and the students in whatever aspect that may help develop competence and better understanding.

During his last relaxation time in Shangri-la Hotel, he was assisted by the bellboy, a former UC basketball player, and teammate of the famous Fajardo. When he proceeded to the check-in counter, another UC HRM graduate expressed her gratitude to Atty. Go

There was even a time when he went to a cruise ship in Alaska, most of the people working in the dining hall were UC graduates. One person introduced himself as the son of a faculty in the Criminology department. He also recounts a time of him relishing the perks of his generosity when he unknowingly passed a one-way street, but the traffic enforcer is a UC graduate, so he took his license but returned it to Atty. Go the day after. He appreciates being recognized by former students because it also makes him happy seeing them now working well in their respective jobs. Thus proving the realness of his being an educator, providing education to the dreamers.

But behind all these successes, he also came from humble beginnings. His family was wealthy but was financially down at that time when he decided to build a school. So, he sold his car and recruited a group of friends to establish a school with him.

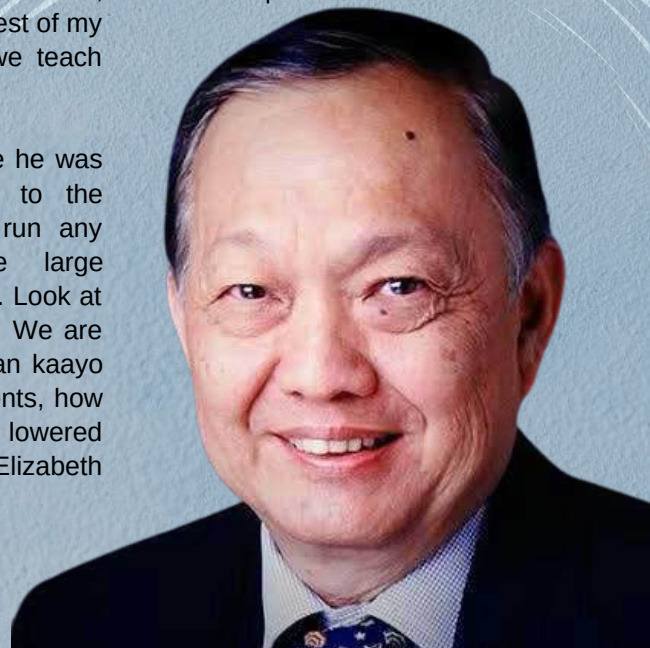
Now almost 86 years old, Atty. Go admits to being slowly echoing his age. With all honesty, he says he is very lonely because most of his friends are dead. He attends meetings with the school heads, but they're mostly younger, to whom he can't relate. Despite these, He is grateful to God that he is alright, doing well, and sharply functioning.

"My daughter will not allow me to go to the hospital because COVID is a death sentence, but I am concerned about my staff. Our healthcare workers, at least, are already vaccinated, but the rest of my staff are not. How? How will we teach with just gadgets?" said Atty. Go.

At first, he was worried because he was admittedly losing money due to the pandemic. "It's very tough to run any business now. Even some large businesses were going bankrupt. Look at the airline industry, for example. We are already in survival mode. Daghan kaayo promissory notes from the students, how can you say no?" Atty. Go even lowered the rental fee of businesses in Elizabeth Mall.

The most feasible way to get things back to normal is if 70% of the population of the Philippines will be vaccinated or immunized. Otherwise, all aspects, especially the economy of our country, will be significantly affected. It does not take a doctor or a lawyer to understand that. Manila is on ECQ again, which means the economy will go from bad to worse. Here in Cebu, the decline is yet timid, but it suffices to say that the situation is terrible. That's why Atty. Go did not hesitate to negotiate in purchasing vaccines when they became available. He wants all his staff vaccinated because they're the people most helpful to him at this time. They are his front-liners. But the private sectors are required to donate 50% "to the masses" if they purchase or import vaccines for their own company. If only the conditions weren't that demanding, maybe 60% of the population has been immunized by now. Instead, we rely on donations with hidden agendas.

Atty. Go's most solid battle plan is vaccination. He doesn't believe in resilience, either, not in a crisis with an obvious solution. He has the conviction to take part in giving remedy to this pandemic, and in fact he is doing so by offering his school buildings to be used as vaccination sites. He knows he has the capacity, and he is prepared to take the necessary measures, regardless of the global demands. But, in a democratic country where everything has to go through a control center, everything has become impossible.





We can become rich anytime, and poor anytime." A note that he keeps in mind ever since his family's business went down before establishing a school. With this thought, he knows that he has to be prepared for anything that may happen. Nobody predicted this pandemic, but he knows how to be in survival mode. Even though the tuition fee in UC is much lower than other schools, with an emblem of "No tuition fee increase," UC will survive because of the students' volume. Even if he only gains one cent per student, it's the volume that matters.

He is very thankful for all that he has - his past experiences, privilege, and capabilities. But he's most grateful to God for giving him a very long life.

"Maybe before, I always thought of money, money, money. But now, I think of what I can do to help people. God has been helping me, so I help people."

Paying forward what God has given him is something that he aims to be his concrete legacy.

There was once a party thrown by a Norwegian shipowner to celebrate their partnership with UC. The hall in the waterfront hotel was packed, and there was no more place to park. Atty. Go remembers these former students. Most of them were not rich, mostly poor or middle-class families, but at that party, they were driving their own cars and celebrating their successes in the Marine industry. These are moments dear to him, seeing the lives he has impacted by his younger self's conviction to build a school, no matter how underestimated and judged he was by society at the time.

A message he wishes to impart to the students of UCSM is simply to be persistent in studying

**"Just study very hard, so you can make your parents, your relatives, and us be proud of you. You will become a doctor. It's a very valuable license for you to be able to practice medicine. Even when the economy is losing millions, you are still able to treat. Get a good education and use it well. Study hard."**

*He goes on to say, "I'm very proud of your product, UCSM. Please continue to give a 100% passing rate, and if someone becomes a topnotcher, mas gwapa pa. Once you have that diploma or that license when you pass the board exam, you will be jumping out of joy. Just like I did when I passed the bar exams. When you become a doctor someday, you will be helping so many people. Just sacrifice 4 years and leave other unnecessary things behind."*

*Atty. Go even gave advice to everyone else's love life, "Marry somebody you really like to serve. The wife should know how to serve the husband, and the husband should also know how to serve the wife. There should be love. Dili ra nga gwapa o gwapo. Most important is the togetherness, and that you understand each other."*

Seeing the success of all of Atty. Go's ventures, witnessing his conviction on things he pursues and treasures, and conversing with a humble, ingenious, virtuous individual, I can only say that it was such a tremendous privilege and blessing that we were given this opportunity to interview the great Cebuano tycoon, lawyer, businessman, philanthropist, environmentalist, recipient of multiple awards in many aspects of society, former councilor and vice mayor of Cebu City, chairman, and founder of UC and shareholder of numerous schools and universities in Cebu, the iconic educator himself, Atty. Augusto W. Go.

**"There are many ways you can make an impact to the world. But there is no greater impact that you can make than spreading education, and empowering people who'll empower and teach people, who, in turn, will empower and teach more."**



Atty. Augusto W. Go with his daughter Miss Candice Gotianuy





STUDENTS' PEDAGOGICAL COMMUNITY

In studying medicine, you need to have perseverance, patience, and the determination to keep fighting regardless of how difficult the road may be. You must learn to inspire and be inspired in return. Having someone to help you on your most challenging times, listen to you when you want to let it all out, and just someone who is there, who understands, who feels the way you feel, and encourages you to go on makes the journey bearable. The Student's Pedagogical Community might be the outlet we are looking for. Together with Angel Anne Ambayan, the Coordinator of the Student Pedagogues and Chairperson of SPC, let us learn more about this organization.

**1** *What is SPC? When did it start, and who founded it?*

The Student's Pedagogical Community is an organization under the Council of Medicine that aims to strengthen students' camaraderie through student-led supplementary tutorial sessions and a buddy system. Dr. Jason C. Bansuela from batch Concordia established this organization in A.Y. 2017-2018.

**2** *What is SPC's vision and mission?*

The Student's Pedagogical Community's vision is to develop excellent medical students in the field of both competence and character through achieving a harmonious community of globally competent and holistically-developed individuals. Its mission is to provide the University of Cebu College of Medicine Foundation, Inc. with an additional avenue to achieve mutual development among its student body by giving student-directed enhancement programs geared towards academic and non-academic aspects of life as a medical student.

# Passing on the Products of Pedagogy

MYLES DOMINIQUE BRAGA

**3** *How do you maintain the organization since we are in a pandemic? What are your activities, and how do you conduct them?*

Due to the pandemic, most of the activities are conducted online. Thus, supplementary lectures in partnership with DASIG, Hoot Camp – Practice Session Series, are conducted through Zoom. Our core groups meet online as well. Though the convenience of time has made meetings much more accessible, we indeed felt a huge gap compared to meeting people face-to-face. However, we aim to maximize whatever resources we have to help build a learning community that makes life as a medical student wholesome and nurturing. We understand that through these challenging times, learning has become more dynamic. Our lives as medical students have changed drastically too. Thus, we continue to seek innovative ways to conduct our activities.

**4** *Currently, how many core groups are there? Can you briefly discuss the structure of the organization?*

The core team for SPC consists of the chairperson, and the coordinator for student pedagogues (Angel Anne Ambayan), core group leaders (Cres Van Loed Bayhonan), and scholars (Ma. Christyl Vie Felias). There are nine core groups with nine (9) core group leaders and 70 members. There are ten student pedagogues. We have conducted tutorial sessions for the first, second, and third years.

**5** *What has been the most significant achievement you have gained from SPC?*

To declare an achievement might be quite early. However, fixed on a solid vision and geared with a vital mission, I see great potential for this organization to flourish even more. Working with passionate colleagues and meeting various medical students who are on the same journey as me, I have learned that being a five-star physician is not solely based on academic performance. Being in the student body's service is a fertile ground to develop the heart for kindness and selflessness. It is an avenue to learn how to work with and for others. It is also a door to know oneself and to know what capabilities we have yet to discover. Surely, time has never been this gold once you enter medical school. Being in this organization has taught me to manage time properly and to make time for others selflessly.

**6** *How to join? Are there requirements?*

Every bonafide student of the University of Cebu School of Medicine is automatically a member of SPC. Thus, any of our tutorial sessions are open to all students and alumni of UCSM. Also, one can join an SPC core group. It is a buddy system where they can engage with fellow students and share their struggles and victories together. The primary goal of this organization is to let every student know that they are not alone, especially now that most of our learning is online. If you struggle with a particular subject/s, we provide an avenue for supplementary learning through Hoot Camps. If you need a shoulder to lean on, we have core groups that can relate to you. What is more important than the destination of reaching our M.D. is the journey itself and with whom we travel this journey. This path allows us to grow, and it also gives us multiple chances to be part of others' growth. A five-star physician from UCSM is driven to excel and driven to serve. In SPC, we aim to hone excellence through service for our fellow medical students and hone this virtue of service to mold excellent medical doctors.



Angel Anne Ambayan  
SPC -CHAIRPERSON



# Surviving Medical School

NEUVILLE FLORINTH LUCRESE ABENIS

When things get rough in medical school, we usually turn to other people for some inspiration to keep ourselves going. It could be our family who is always there for us no matter what or our classmates with whom we share the same struggles, or maybe our non-medical friends who can remind us that life is not solely about studying and passing (or failing) exams. It could also be the batches ahead of us who amaze us how they survived the hardships of being a medical student.

At one point in medical school, I believe that most of us have looked up in awe at the higher batches and thought, “Grabe jud ang mga higher years noh, basta makalantaw ko nila, mainspire ko. Giunsa na nila pagpasar?” So I interviewed two UCSM graduates who willingly shared some of their experiences as medical students and some advice and tips on how to brave medical school.

Doc Rayn Jezreel Romero is from Batch Concordia and is currently a post-graduate intern at Philippine General Hospital (PGH). Doc Cy Johann Kent Romuga is the class valedictorian of Batch Primoris and Top 3 in the Physician Licensure Examination (March 2021). Both of them belong to the cream of the crop of their respective batches. And to inspire us more, they are actually a couple who could balance their academic, social, and love life. A power couple, if I may say.

When asked how it was like being a medical student at UCSM, Doc Cy shared that learning medicine at UC might look like it's all about studying; it was not just about that. It was also about enjoying the adventure.

“It was fun primarily because of the people in my batch. Nobody was noticeably toxic, and everyone just suffered through it together. I must admit I cared too much to be mad at some exams initially, but as time progressed, I just bantered with classmates then moved on right away.

I came to UCMed just on happenstance, and I just went through the ride. The details and my specific experiences inside the school have been hazy. It has been 3 years since, assuming school-life ended by 3rd year since clerkship is just hospital work, Mobile Legends, and occasional drinking and dates for me. Besides the times I went out with my classmates and friends and time spent with my girlfriend in school, I cannot recall much on the academic side of things except when we won a quiz bowl twice and placed well on some.

***For me, medical school was less about studying medicine than the experience of going along the years through all the challenges with my batch. Life is bigger than academics, after all.***

Doc Rayn also shared that her time at UCSM as a medical student will always be dear.

“Truthfully, it was great. It wasn't perfect, but being a PGI now and looking back at it, I hold those memories dear. Being part of one of the pioneering batches of our school somehow made me feel so many emotions simultaneously. Personally — and generally, we all strive to become competent doctors, but being a product of UC only doubled that determination. Having gone through our curriculum, I'm well aware that we have received a quality education, and I feel that sort of deep-seated albeit quiet drive to pay it back, to show people what we are really made of.”

True enough, both of them have made our school proud with their academic performances. Both of them were accepted at PGH for their post-graduate internship (PGI). I asked Doc Rayn about why she chose to go to PGH for her PGI despite the pandemic. Doc Rayn answered,

“Objectively speaking, PGH has been around for more than 100 years and has gone through a lot, including different outbreaks and pandemics throughout time. I would like to call it a fundamental and almost historical institution. That being said, I feel and believe that with the standard for healthcare in our country, PGH is well equipped with resources to battle and rally against this virus that has affected us greatly in every way possible.

Would I experience the ideal setting of being a PGI? — No. Am I confident in being on par with batches that have graduated before the pandemic? — The answer is still no, but I will take whatever I could, given this wonderful privilege, to learn from them.

***Life isn't always going to go our way. We have to be quick and smart in making the best decision given a certain situation.***

On the other hand, Doc Cy wasn't able to continue his PGH internship because of the pandemic.

“I did not, actually. We stopped when it started to worsen, stayed in Manila because travel was difficult, and then volunteered from time to time on the teleconsultation service because there was nothing to do. Doing nothing when you are supposed to be doing something just felt weird. COVID is an unpredictable disease that is mostly indolent but may mess vulnerable people up. As much as I wanted to continue internship, the fear of an unpredictable outcome if ever I get this disease was enough to make me glad that internship stopped even if the experience took a hit.”

Being an intern is already difficult as it is. How much more when you are an intern during a pandemic involving a rapidly spreading and deadly virus. I asked Doc Rayn how she survived internship amid the pandemic. To which Doc Rayn replied,

“I personally do not place myself in the mindset of “surviving.” I feel lucky and grateful regardless of everything that has happened. In this time of crisis, my thoughts really do not settle solely on me and my welfare alone. When I think of the amount of effort and toil the healthcare team members have poured into combatting this virus, the hardship that the poor and marginalized are experiencing, I am in no position to complain. I personally feel like I should just keep on moving forward. Every day, I wake up and thank God for whatever I have, and that alone is enough to help me start my day.”

Doc Cy, however, spent most of the pandemic studying and preparing for the board exams. I also asked him how he survived the board exams despite feeling the impact of the pandemic on our nation

“This is mostly a financial problem rather than a studying problem. I must admit, we aren't well off at all, and things got worse financially during the pandemic. Studying was not a problem and never was. I got so much free time because there was literally very little else I can do. I was not pressured to find work during my vacation at home as I always found it reasonable to not find one during the pandemic. That and I use the “I have to study because I might top the boards this March” card most of the time. I am a lazy person, I know, but it worked somehow.”





His studying eventually paid off because not only did he pass, but he also placed third in the PLE in March 2021. With this, I also asked him about his secret of being a topnotcher, to which he replied,

“Always compete with yourself. Be self-aware, and have self-control. Competing with yourself removes the pressure imposed by others on you. Self-awareness raises the need for self-improvement and appreciation for individual accomplishments. Self-control allows you to achieve that self-improvement and develop consistency.

Of course, a good support system is important. I am blessed with parents who aren't toxic and won't pressure me to achieve anything freeing my mind to just do what I can without much conflict on the family side of things. I am blessed with good friends, non-toxic people I had fun with, some study with almost every night at the school canteen and others I play video games with. I have a really good grade S girlfriend who, on a scale of 1-10, is an 11. A non-toxic and balance romance is a key to leveling up my drive to achieve more than just the “passing” on all of my exams since we started dating. In short, just focus on self-growth and be driven for others as well as yourself. Rinse and repeat.”

And of course, because they belong to the pioneer first two batches of UCSM, I also asked for their advice and tips on how to successfully overcome the hardships in medical school. Doc Rayn shared four key points on overcoming these adversities:

*Ask yourself why you are doing this. Why are you studying?* 1

For me, it is crucial to have a purpose. Do not study aimlessly. Personally, I studied hard because of my patients. I didn't want my ineptness to someday dictate the life and demise of my patients. Of course, I know nobody is perfect, but we can always work hard for greatness.

*2 Surround yourself with people who share your concerns and goals.*

Two words. Peer pressure. It will be beneficial if you are around people who motivate you and honestly care for you.

*We are humans.* 3

I always pray to God when I feel overwhelmed. I will be lying if I say I haven't had my share of failures and moments where you are just in a slump or moments that you feel burnt out. Make sure you have regular occasions where you unwind, spend time with family, and whatever activity that releases your stress.

*4 Medicine is not just about grades.*

Med school is the easiest part of medicine. Yes, acquiring as much knowledge as we can is vital to our profession, but without the right attitude and values, I personally believe it will affect the quality of healthcare you offer to your patients. Love learning and be a good person. Lastly, stay safe and stay healthy.

Doc Cy also shared that balancing different aspects in life (i.e., social, academic, and spiritual) is one way of surviving medical school.

“Keep a mindset that medical school is the easiest part. I know for sure when I will start residency, this will be even truer. Studying is never a problem unless a big crisis hits your life. Do not make it a problem by wasting ALL the time you should have spent studying. Of course, you can still go out on weekends or weekdays if there are no exams on the following day except for pretests you are willing to sacrifice.

You can still do your hobbies, go on dates or waste some on the internet or sleeping. I even take 1-2 nights off per week sleeping during medical school because it can get toxic to your brain to constantly read books. Balancing life is essential but may be challenging to achieve, especially when relaxation and complacency become stronger than work and focus. And always remember to be consistent in your efforts.

If things go awry, pray to God and relax. Remind yourself why you are on this path, strengthen your resolve by your reasons, and soldier on. Medical school is a commitment. You cannot do your commitments haphazardly unless you are not the one making this one. Give it your all when you have to but always remember to put self-care between it all.”

Indeed, I agree with both of them. It is always important to look back to the very reason why we wanted to pursue medicine. With the never-ending amount of chapters to read and the seemingly endless streak of failed exams, it is easy to question ourselves, “Why? Why did I even study medicine?” It is easy to forget that this very situation was something that we once prayed for. It is easy to keep on looking for answers to why medical school is too hard instead of praying and surrendering everything to God. When hopelessness starts to creep into our minds, and we feel like we are an utter failure because of our failing grades, we have to remember that we are not alone in this battle. We have our family, friends, and, most importantly, the Lord. We have to remember that we are not just doing this for ourselves. We are doing this for our future patients and for the glory of God.





# The Virtual Batch

JOSHMARY DENICE SAPLAD

“Who would’ve thought it’s possible?”, this is just one of the comments of the general public referring to the many things proven to be doable with gadgets and the internet — even commencing one’s Medical Studies! After a year into the pandemic, we asked the 6th Batch of the University of Cebu School of Medicine, Batch Cinctus, through an informal survey regarding their online medical journey. We gathered 62 responses out of 106 students from the batch, and they shared with us their experiences and concerns on the current platform.

They have concluded that online medical school is pretty “meh” or in formal word, *satisfactory*. The amount of effort, the contribution of the online platform to their knowledge/skills, and the level of workload are practically just right, but that works quite well for everyone involved. Why? Because the online school system being used by UCSM is comparably better. To elaborate, there are many factors why these students chose this institution, largely foremost is due to quality education. “UCSM’s methods for online medical education are smoother and easier to work with than other medical schools out there. It’s not the best, but it’s way far above the bottom rank too. It makes one grateful that UCSM is one of the schools that, more or less, transitioned effectively to the online platform.” as one student said. All these added to the privileges of cheaper tuition, encouraging location and distance of the school, and the scholarships offered!

While braving through Medicine amidst the pandemic, Batch Cinctus shared a common character of being resourceful, determined, driven, and competitive individuals, with a bunch of “meme-lords” on the side. Unfortunately, despite all the efforts, some members of the pack were not able to cross the second semester. This is very understandable, though, seeing the impossibility of face-to-face classes this Academic Year, and the underlying demands of medical schooling. Although it is hard to change the system of med school in general, in whatever aspect, mental health included, the school is doing its best to help and intervene on their end as much.

“It was a struggle to adapt quickly and efficiently to the new platform of learning, not only for the students but also for the doctors as well.” Some of the students understand, but most are hoping for an improvement next academic year.



Nothing is truer than these 6 letters “ngl idk” meaning “[I’m] not gonna lie. I don’t know.” — a legitimate and valid response to why enroll despite the online platform. Is it not relatable? It perhaps even sums up the whole duration of med school, whether online or offline. Ngl, “*idk how to manage having anxiety attacks because...*”

Still, despite this confusing but interesting, challenging yet fulfilling, physically and mentally draining but life-changing chain of obstacles, 66.7% of the respondents agree that the reason they enrolled is because of the timeline they have already set for their life. At least, only a few were pressured by their parents, or influenced by their friends, just about 11 of them. The rest simply jumped on their accord, wanting to have that MD sooner.

“Learning while lacking interaction with like-minded peers is exhausting. If you decide to pursue online med school, one should be armed with enough self-control and motivation to continue by yourself.”

The lack of physical meetings has agreeably, to some degree, hindered students in learning. However, UCSM still made sure that the students feel competent enough, not just fostering a competitive environment but also having the drive to excel. “Everyone is intelligent, hardworking, and competent, maintaining positivity and passion despite the challenges. We strive to overcome the challenges of online learning together and try to help each other as much as we can.”

“When done right, online learning does complement some limitations of classroom learning. I hope UCSM would still be able to incorporate these advantages when returning to a face-to-face setup. (Like recorded lectures, ppts, and exams with instant feedback on performance).”

We get doubtful of the things we learn. Most often, we ask, “am I understanding this right?” But, it doesn’t mean we’re undergoing a “watered-down version of medical education.” Yes. It is hard to adjust. It’s lonely and stressful. Sometimes it makes us lazy. We’re just all by ourselves, so it pushes us to be more independent, to concentrate on ourselves more, without the fear or insecurity that one is doing better than the other. It’s just a constant cycle of trying to compete with oneself- trying to better oneself.

**Now the big news here is that — that’s Medicine. That’s Law school. That is every other difficult thing we have to go through in any aspect. But when we finally accomplish it, you’ll see all the struggles setting you to become someone you need to be in the future. Will you let it mold you?**



# Of Life, Love, and Realizations

An excerpt from  
*What We Owe the Universe*  
[bit.ly/3a7shNV](http://bit.ly/3a7shNV)

Climate change is the absolute result of all the good things we avoided because it's inconvenient; the things we thought were good because it's easier, quicker, and convenient — and the things we simply didn't care about because it doesn't visibly apply to our life anyway.

We are all contributors to how damaged this world has become. We failed to aim for substance, and we settled for mediocrity. We justify our actions with our ignorance. We placed limits on everything about us, and we all resorted to apathy very easily. Most importantly, we failed to realize the most limited resources we have: where we live, and how we are alive. Is it really too late to create a better world, or is it just inconvenient?

*The Day I Told My Parents I Failed Physiology*  
[thecreativemd](http://thecreativemd)

I thought the most painful thing in medical school is finding out that you did not pass a subject at the end of the school year; not until I was confronted with the fact that I needed to tell it to my parents. I remember how shaky and teary I was while typing the “most perfect” words that would explain my situation. I even tried writing it all down on scratch paper and in a journal, only to find myself shattered that my hands could not even move the pen.

I have forgotten who I was back then. The “perfect” child whom they admire for being excellent and brilliant turned out to be a disgrace to the family. It felt like I do not deserve all the sacrifices and support that they have given me for my medical studies; I have wasted a lot of money from our family that could have been put to a much better use if it were not for my tuition.

It was a very long apologetic message that opens with, “Momdad, there is no better way to say this than I AM SORRY.” My eyes were all dried up, but I am still sniveling. I have never been that nervous...

*“Sweetie, we are so proud of you! You passed all your subjects but one! Cry it out, and then get over yourself and the self-pity. We know you have done so well. Continue to trust the Lord because you will encounter more failures along the way that will equip you to become the best Physician that He designed you to be. God will carry you through this, as He always does. Move forward and get ready again...”*

*There is nothing you could ever do that will make us not love you.”*

The day I told my parents I failed Physiology, is the day I am reminded that I am beyond my failures. And so, I continue to fight on!

## Reverence

When I look at the mountains  
 Oceans, heavens, and all in-betweens;  
 The human body  
 And how it's weaved unimaginably

*There's no such thing as serendipity.*



Constantly discouraged  
 Constantly doubting  
 And yet there is a gift  
 Only opened within

*Untitled*  
 Eirene

Constantly rejected  
 Constantly fighting  
 For I know there is strength  
 Eternal strength within



*Pining*  
 Shin

Ilang “ayoko na” pa ba bago ko tuluyang bitawan ang hibla ng pasensya sa lipunang walang pakialam, at ayaw makialam sa buhay ng isang halaman na pinipilit lumago ngunit patuloy na inaapakan?

Hangga't pinapanatili pa rin ang pining, pinipikit ang mata, nananatili sa dilim, kailanman Kalayaan ay di maaatim.

*Paumanhin.*



*Untitled*  
 Vie

and then the cold and long nights came  
 it felt magical in a sense  
 how easily it replaced the warm festivities  
 into a cold slumber  
 how easily he left  
 without telling me why

you came back to me  
 like a repressed memory  
 crawling its way to my consciousness  
 residing in every sulcus  
 and I could only do so little  
 to fight back the feelings  
 I once thought I'd never feel again  
 but here we are  
 and you are here  
 and I know you'd leave me again



# Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic

ABBE MARGARETTE ARRADAZA

During a time when millions are struggling to make ends meet, put food on the table, and keep the lights on, how are you to find time to take care of yourself? You may answer, “No, now more than ever; the priorities need to be set straight. Food, shelter, clothing, first. Mental health can wait.”

However, one cannot help but ask: was mental health ever a priority, even before the pandemic hit?

On the 20th of June 2018, Republic Act No. 11036 was signed into law. Also known as the Mental Health Act, this law seeks to “[promote] the well-being of people by ensuring that mental health is valued, promoted, and protected; mental health conditions are treated and prevented; timely, affordable, high quality, and culturally-appropriate mental health care is made available to the public...” Under this law, mental health is deemed a right of every Filipino.

While we can say that this is a significant step in the right direction, we still have a long way to go. Data from 2019 shows that there are a little over 500 practicing psychiatrists in the Philippines. Over half of them are found in the National Capital Region. How they are expected to provide care to over 110 million people scattered throughout an archipelago of over 7,000 islands, nobody knows. It is alarming to see how, even after creating the Mental Health Act, we do not even have enough people to manage suicide prevention hotlines.

**Two years and a global pandemic later, how is the state of mental health, not just in the Philippines but also in other countries?**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that from August 2020 to February 2021, the percentage of adults dealing with anxiety or depressive disorders increased from 36.4% to 41.5%, while the percentage of those reporting unaddressed mental health care needs rose from 9.2% to 11.7%.

The numbers are more disturbing for those who have actually contracted the dreaded virus. An article published in The Lancet Psychiatry reported that 1 in 3 people who have overcome the virus suffer a neurological or psychiatric disorder within six months of infection. The most common diagnoses are anxiety, mood disorders, substance misuse disorders, and insomnia.

We cannot say that these responses took us by surprise. Fear and grief often accompany outbreaks of infectious diseases, especially an outbreak of this magnitude. The World Happiness Report lists four factors that can influence the development of mental health issues amid a pandemic.

First among these is the reality of the virus itself, as people must deal with the possibility of getting infected, infecting others, or worse, death. Second, the undeniable consequence of worrying about finances, especially during this time of rampant unemployment, can lead to both short-term and long-term health-related anxieties. Third, the strain that may come from “domestic family arrangements” during periods of lockdown or community quarantine can be a complication to an already distressing situation. Lastly, all these factors are compounded by restricting activities that may otherwise help relieve all other stressors.



A little over a year into the world's harshest lockdown and the economy is in shambles, the hospitals are full, and still, there is no end to the pandemic in sight. The mandates to stay at home, wear masks, and stay a meter away from other people have become so repetitive and so monotonous that they are starting to sound like background noise. All this in addition to a national government response that has been dismal at best, essentially leaving the people to fend for themselves, can understandably take its toll on a person's mental well-being.

To say that it is difficult to address mental health when you are shoved into a situation such as this is an understatement. For many people, if mental health was not a priority before, now it is not even in the footnotes. For every new day that we wake up to a world being ravaged by an invisible enemy, we will only continue to fall apart if we fail to take care of our whole selves, body *and* mind.

“  
**MENTAL HEALTH  
IS JUST AS  
IMPORTANT AS  
PHYSICAL HEALTH**  
IT'S OKAY TO ASK FOR HELP!  
”





# IN THE EYES OF EVERY JUAN

IRIS MARIE ANTONIO

*Juan Dela Cruz, a 23-year-old third-year medical student, scholar, and consistent top student, repetitively refreshes the exam page. This is how exams are now: click, next, and hope for the page to load. "This isn't how it was", he mutters. He takes a quick walk down memory lane, that of a sunny morning in mid-March of 2020. News flashed all over the screen announcing the suspension of classes among all year levels in the Philippines. "A safety measure against the COVID-19 pandemic," Malacanang announced. He took a good look at his classroom and friends, not knowing that he'd be in for a 360-degree roller coaster ride in the days to come.*

There will be "deployment of available flexible learning and alternative mode of delivery in lieu of on-campus learning," the Philippines Commission of Higher Education (CHED) says. A good initiative by CHED but comes with no fixed implementing rules. Leading private higher education institutions (HEI) to make their own policies that they feel will be effective to their students. And with that, medical students are confronted with interrelated barriers as they try to adapt to this change.

*Juan's father upgrades to a high-speed internet consuming more than half of his wage, a fraction supposedly allotted for primary needs. The Philippines has the "fourth most expensive mobile broadband cost in ASEAN but with mobile broadband speed below the average," reports the World Bank. It ranks "second slowest in ASEAN and 110th among 139 countries worldwide," says SpeedTest Global Index figures. This is a major problem for a nation that heavily relies on the internet to learn, not to mention families compelled to procure the higher speed at the expense of their meager wages for their children to attend class.*

While some institutions embraced inclusivity and have given out gadgets to students, even a stable internet connection holds no control over the sudden power outage and bad weather conditions. These primarily disrupt live lectures, exams and affect the learning experience.

*Juan is seemingly confused at a surgery demonstration, unsure if he'd be able to do it right. "I don't have enough equipment to practice," he says in exasperation. He looks over to his sister, to whom he shares ample space on the study table. "Help me review," sister pleads. "Of course, after I cook dinner," he answers.*

Juan is not alone. A recent national survey of Philippine medical students by Baticulon et al. presents a striking finding: a higher percentage experience more challenges in situations at home and individual study habits. "There's difficulty in concentration due to financial difficulties, conflicts with family, no conducive space for studying and domestic responsibilities," the data says. On top of that, they experience anxiety, loneliness, and burnout due to a lack of social interaction with peers. Overall, a greater chunk reported mental health difficulty.

Skills-based subjects and clinical education now happens through case conferences, small group discussions, and telemedicine. This learning mode strengthens the theoretical foundation; however, a major concern is harnessing the crucial skills for the actual clinical setting. No amount of online coaching could replace patient handling, the actual delivery of a newborn, or stitching methods acquired when assisting a surgery. This shows that though efforts on accessible learning materials are established, successful learning outcomes may not be achieved due to other barriers. The goal "No Filipino learner should be left behind" dances with defeat. It is trudging through a path that further widens the gap between social classes and tags along educational inequality with it.

CHED and DOH say, "Health-related degree programs will be prioritized." Ah, they finally listen! A solution not quite parallel with cries of #AcademicFreeze but hands medical students the quality training that they deserve amidst this pandemic. After all, the future health forces of this country must be valued. Safety protocols, guidelines, and policies are in place with this program, of course.

*This is a trying time for the educational system, medical institutions included. The online platform helps sustain education, but it cannot benefit everyone if one persistently puts a blind eye to the existing challenges associated with it. It will not only interfere with the training of future physicians but could affect the quality of the entire health care in the future as well. "What should the best route for medicine be in this pandemic?" they ask. Still uncertain. But it would never hurt to go back to being human. Medical institutions must assess individual needs and provide considerations, especially to those with additional burdens at home.*

**It would be best to have a holistic approach and student-centered interventions. Establish mental health and wellness programs. Most importantly, in this time of uncertainty, compassion.**

*In the words of the Hippocratic Oath: "I will remember that there is art to medicine as well as science, and that warmth, sympathy, and understanding may outweigh the surgeon's knife or the chemist's drug."*

*Just In: "Juan de la Cruz, MD bags 1st place on PLE 2022; thanks university and mentors for empathy and support during the pandemic" Juan awakens, "What a dream!" And so... he continues to hope.*



# SILANG MGA NASA LAYLAYAN:

How the Less Privileged are Highly at Risk to COVID-19

ANGEL MELODY LEGERA



The moral obligation to reduce the risk of the COVID-19 pandemic primarily lies within the concerted efforts of the government and its people. However, this crisis imposes a more significant threat to the less privileged. Poverty and social inequalities have increased the severity of the virus while exposing the country's massive gap of good governance.

In the Philippines, there are over 13,000 COVID-19 related deaths after a year into the pandemic. The cases have exponentially surged in the first and second quarter of 2021, marking the highest single-day record with over 15,000 positive cases. The Department of health relates the alarming surge to sustained community transmission, increased contact and motility, and increased testing capacity. The non-observance of minimum health safety protocols such as wearing facemasks, frequent hand washing, physical distancing, and staying at home also play a vital role. On the other hand, the critics blame the administration for the outbreak: limited testing, the late rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine, lack of quarantine and health facilities, misallocation of funds, etc. Regardless, the most vulnerable suffer.

Amidst the pandemic, people living below the poverty line are amplified. Along with the distraught caused by natural calamities, the virus has caused an economic downturn. These unfortunate occurrences left most individuals jobless and financially challenged. To safeguard Filipino families and the community at large, the Inter-Agency Task Force developed omnibus guidelines on implementing community quarantine in the Philippines with the goal of "balancing economic activity and public health."

Following these guidelines, some public and private sectors have implemented a work from home setup to contain the spread of the virus. Unfortunately, this does not apply to all. It is easy to stay physically distant only if you earn and remain professionally engaged at home.

According to the 2020 data of the Philippine Statistics Authority, the largest group of employed and underemployed workers belong to the services sector. People working as market vendors, drivers, sales clerks, mechanics, and delivery workers cannot remotely get the job done. Those who commonly fall to these sectors have no choice but to expose themselves to the virus in order to earn a living.

**Because while the rich panicked to secure food and supplies to survive an imposed lockdown, the poor could only afford to panic.**

Unfortunate are those whose family has been afflicted because they need to go out to feed themselves and make it throughout the day. With the country's underdeveloped strategic plan and course of action, who knows what a novel virus can do?

Another pressing national concern is that many people live in crowded settlements and slum communities where physical distancing is practically impossible, and healthcare services are scarce. An additional burden is also brought about by limited access to clean water, good sanitation, and a well-balanced diet. Medical attention is crucial to the poor, especially for those with pre-existing conditions. Meanwhile, affordability, accessibility, and equity of medical care and treatment remain a challenge.

The fiasco of education is something we should not brush aside. Different myths and misinformation are also circulating everywhere, mostly affecting the disadvantaged. People's actions and health-seeking behaviors are highly dependent on what they believe to be true. Believing in fake news and unverified facts encourages the public to neglect, or worse, not acknowledge the virus at all. And when one finally decided to get tested, the virus had already spread.

The gravity of the abuse of power that has been looming around for ages also exacerbates the current crisis. Some of those who hold leadership positions are non-compliant to the same protocols that they mandated. Even the rule of law often discriminates against the poor, as was proven by several reports involving higher officials breaching quarantine protocols, the conduct of VIP testing, illegal use of COVID vaccine, and many others. Apparently, an underprivileged Filipino need to endure the hassle of queuing to be tested, vaccinated, and admitted to a health facility. Moreover, handcuffs, bullets, and steel bars only recognize the poor, yet it turns a blind eye to the offense committed by the powerful.

The invisible SARS-CoV-2, albeit a life-threatening virus, is also in the business of accentuating the national predicaments occurring since centuries past. And in a country where the political system has long been an issue, it is more costly to be less privileged.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the scream of the hungry is louder than the voices of those who are dreadful of the disease. But oh, how deadlier are the ways of those who try to silence them. The right to health should be equal for all. No one should suffer from a preventable sickness because of the fine line that divides the privileged and the poor. There is no known vaccine for indifference, but *compassion and competence could heal*.





# Medicine Above Politics

MARK ANTHONY ALMOSARA

With the current dilemma on surviving this health crisis and governmental issues highlighted by insatiable individuals in the society, a thought incessantly bothers me on the interrelationship of Medicine and Politics.

It was part of the history when human experiments carried out by the national socialist group Nazis made a blot on Medicine as well as other forms of atrocious medical policing, which advocates eradicating the weak and those who are not considered normal from society. In an old article by Eric Krakauer, "On Medicine and Politics", he explored the links that seam Medicine to Politics. He dug down the roots of the past and the nitty-gritty of these two subjects. He concluded that it is impossible to separate Medicine from politics based on the increasing complexity of society and government in this modern period. He emphasized the bigotry of physicians of the past who carried out medical tasks by ridding the society of the vulnerable and sickly to protect the nation and its citizens. These drives are mainly established by politicians, as the author suggested, "by disguised self-interest and racist or xenophobic nationalisms behind a mask of medico-political altruism."

It has been documented in different parts of North and South America, Europe, Asia, and Africa the eugenic institutional sterilization of women who were considered part of a racial minority, poor, living with HIV/AIDS, and including those who have a history of bearing children with mental disability.

This also was a human rights issue in history where both politicians and physicians insist on preventing these women from bearing any offspring justifying that the latter cannot fulfill child support and minimize the incidence of poverty and disease.

In the early 1980s, when HIV/AIDS epidemic was first recognized, there has been incidence of strong medical policing that deny and isolate certain groups of people of civil rights; in fact, this also covertly proposed and aimed at homosexual and bisexual men, IV drug users, female prostitutes, illegal immigrants, and other marginalized minorities.

**One thing we must learn in the shadows of these historical events: malicious ulterior motives of Political drives in the name of Medicine and health is an affront to humanity.**

Here in our country, improving healthcare is a too familiar platform for any political campaign. New funds to provide moralistic support for the healthcare workers, proper infrastructures to convey the best service available, and transparency and accountability remain more rhetoric than reality. It seems that politics saps Medicine and exploits its essence to push hideous political agenda. Last year was a bad year for the "mafia members" of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) when a whistleblower testified during the senate investigation of the alleged anomalous transactions and widespread corruption. These mafia members of the said corporation allegedly ganked 15 billion and caused our officials and investigators to be embattled. The latest update of this controversy as further probe continues, PhilHealth Spokesperson said that these funds were distributed to 711 health care facilities nationwide as part of the COVID-19 response, and they already accounted for 13 billion while the rest of it is still pending for liquidation. The issue does not only show irregularities. It simply strips our fellow Filipinos, who lack health financing, the justice they deserve if allegations come out truthful.

Circulation of negative news stories from different media outlets stressing the incompetence of the current administration does not help at all, nor posting or reposting provocative messages against the current administration in the social media from lay people only to aggravate the present political situation would serve as fuel to the already fiery coals on people's heads. Anyhow, there is also an apparent problem in the execution of inconsistent rules and policies from the higher-ups to the local enforcers regarding minimum standard health protocols, mandated curfews, and lockdowns. Take, for example, the delivery rider carrying porridge as essential good and the Maginhawa community pantry fiasco, a humanitarian act red-tagged as a nuance that holds political agenda by the confused officials. Bureaucratic red tape might also cause a delay in responding to this crisis, particularly in the national deployment of the vaccines. That is why the President also emphasized, with the knowledge and expertise of the House of Representatives on legislation, that he wants to cut or amend this Act.

When the President took a long absence from the public eye and social media posts hashtagging "*Nasaan Ang Pangulo?*", critics made noise. The presidential spokesperson said that the President's recent absence was a measure to keep him and his staff safe. It does make sense because of the rising number of new cases, even among the Malacañang staff. There was no dereliction of duty, yet clunking noise from the detractors persists. To have the President's health jeopardized is the last thing we want now. Why blame where one is also considered a faulty speck in the whole picture. There is always a glimmer of hope and restoration of faith in humanity; we are better than this. Let us not be consumed by hate but do our part in solution-building.



It has been more than a year in the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic. From ongoing research on the nature and potency of the virus and its variants to the latest testing procedures and special mention of the laudable development of the vaccines and its roll-out, we can easily tell that we are blessed to live in this period where medical advancements are nonpareil as compared before.

As clear as broad daylight, hospitals, though overrun and overwhelmed, did their job. As citizens, where do we fit in the solution-building? The current handling of this pandemic crisis measures the amount of competency our government, health sector, and citizens have.

Politics is a loaded term. It revolves around the art of governance, public affairs, conflict resolution, and the study of power. From this standpoint, one could tell that current political practices are a mess based on the observation we have on its effects on society and its impact on our individuality. To have current Politics mingle with Medicine is an inexpressible threat, a doom on our very own existence. There is no way to have our health played puppet by inefficient and unstable bureaucracy and malicious political propaganda run by incorrigible and corrupt politicians. But rather, may we become advocates in formulating ways on how Medicine could influence politics and perchance save this languishing system.

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# Current Trends on COVID-19 Handling

MARK ANTHONY ALMOSARA

SARS-COV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, has a vast impact on our health and eventually disrupts the economy. Each country has its prerogative and steps to combat the pandemic according to the World Health Organization guidelines and the latest credible research studies to match the needs of their situation in the new normal.

Hospitals are in full capacity, forcing them to have makeshift facilities to provide expansion to the growing number of positive cases that need admittance. According to the latest information from the DOHs tracker, utilized ICU beds in the whole country is at 65% out of 1,900 total beds, isolation beds at 47% out of 13,600 total beds, ward beds at 53% out of 6,000 total beds, and ventilators at 46% out of 2,000. Among the active cases, 95.5% of them are mild. The National Capital Region (NCR) is among the high-risk areas in the country; that is why there is always a shortage of hospital facilities in this region, particularly ICU beds, which are continually at high to critical rates.

## Global Variants of the COVID-19 Virus

Latest reports show new variants of the COVID-19 virus among different countries. The virus's variations are inevitable because the more it is transmitted, it causes it to undergo other numbers of mutations that rapidly emerge; this could affect its lethality on its level of transmissibility and severity. WHO stated that it is crucial for the pharmaceutical manufacturers and programs utilizing the vaccine to make modifications like giving booster shots, incorporation of other strains, and vaccine reformulation, to contain the evolving virus & prevent severe cases to happen.

The WHO established the SARS-COV-2 Risk Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, which aims to identify, monitor and evaluate the variants of concern. Manufacturers and countries need to have fresh information on this framework, for it serves as a guide for them to reformulate the vaccine as well as its deployment.

## National Deployment and Vaccination Plan for COVID-19 Vaccines

As the country's economy nose-dives and its debts inflate, the government has to search for ways to open businesses without jeopardizing the people's health. Deployment of the vaccines was done early in March and has made the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) modify the quarantine protocols that would loosen restrictions and begin the resumption of different businesses.

Initially, the DOH released key circular policies from setting a price range for COVID-19 RT-PCR. Testing last December 2020 to priority guidelines for the vaccine deployment early this year. The first 600,000 CoronaVac doses donated by the People's Republic of China on February 28 had an additional 400,000 doses on March 24.

Alongside the government's procurement and rolling-out of Sinovac and AstraZeneca and the CoronaVac donation from China, health officials reviewed the previous policies to its amendments which now contain vaccination to individuals who were not included in the priority group from the previous policy. These measures are vital for the government's inoculation campaign to meet the increasing demands from different regions.

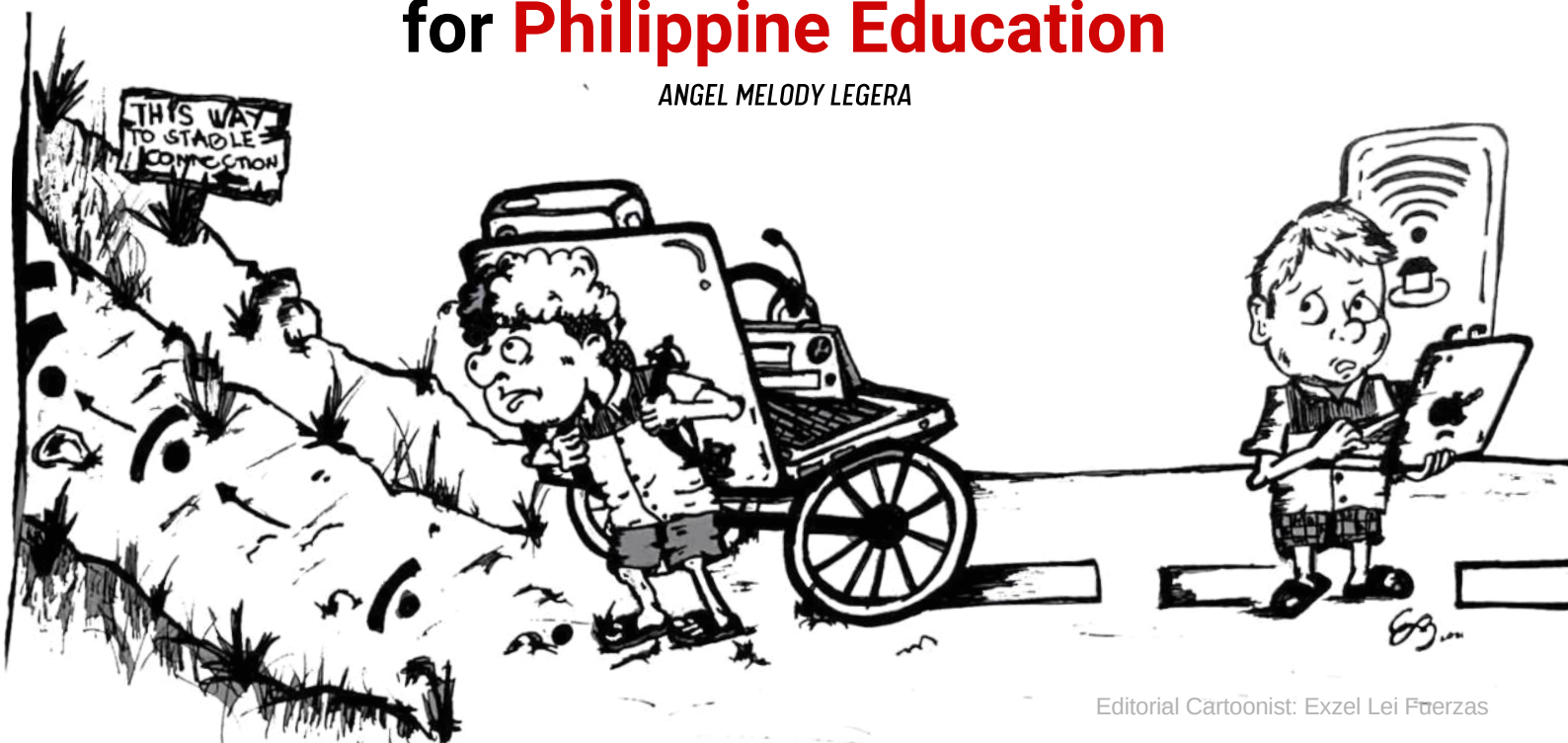
## Implications from abiding to minimum public health standards and protocols

Proper wearing of facemask, hand-washing and physical distancing is the minimum health standards set by the WHO health officials on the onset of this crisis. Aside from additional suggestive reinforcement in wearing face shields, there have been no significant changes to these protocols. These non-pharmaceutical interventions are aimed at the individual and community level to reduce transmission rates and further mitigate the virus's spread to the large population. In a speaking engagement with the House health panel, contact tracing czar Benjamin Magalong enumerated the challenges faced by the contact tracing capability of the country. He specified that active contact-tracing of possible infected individuals wane as a result of lack of workforce, implementation problems of some LGUs, lack of additional resources for contact tracing analytical tools, and so on; a loophole that the government needs to assess to effectively and consistently combat this situation.



# Solid e-ralan: Drawbacks and Opportunities for **Philippine Education**

ANGEL MELODY LEGERA



Editorial Cartoonist: Exzel Lei Pterzas

While the COVID-19 pandemic levies its most significant threat to global health, it is undeniable that the educational system is vastly affected. There is no better reason why most Filipinos are resistant to change than the apparent fact that our country is not yet fully equipped with appropriate measures necessary to reinforce the changes. This also means that more opportunities are left for everyone to work more efficiently to accomplish greater and better things for the Philippines.

According to UNESCO, around 1.5 billion learners — representing 91% of the world's school population — were affected by the peak of the COVID-19 crisis. In the Philippines, the conduct of face-to-face classes was halted following the President's declaration of a public health emergency due to SARS-COV-2 last 08 March 2020. Students have had no choice but to adapt to the sudden changes, albeit many are deprived of adequate opportunities.

Fifteen months have passed, and a "Safe Back to School Program" is still in the pipeline. *I hope it is.* The Commission on Higher Education chairman said on a webinar last 21 May 2021, in line with the institution's policy, that "From now on, flexible learning will be the norm. There's no going back to the traditional full-packed face-to-face classrooms....".

The said statement received backlash from people offline and on the internet. The #NoStudentLeftBehind as well as #LigtasBalikEskwela trended on Twitter as several stakeholders and critics rejected the normalization of flexible learning. According to the opposition, flexible learning is not applicable for all, especially when conducive learning spaces remain a challenge to many, much so to the most vulnerable. And there are no clear education relief measures in sight that equally covers everyone, including swift vaccination programs. On top of that, the current setup has taken a toll on everyone's well-being. It is even alarming that incidents of depression, violence, and suicide among students and teachers were reported due to the "burdens" brought by online learning.

On a report by The National Center for Mental health, there is a striking increase in suicide-related calls transpiring during this pandemic. The Department of Health, through NCMH, developed a team of respondents composed of health professionals who will help man the 24/7 crisis hotline. Other public and private organizations, like the Philippine Red Cross, have the same initiative. The Department of Education, represented by its secretary, admitted that the mental health of students and teachers is a big challenge amidst this time.

Meanwhile, the official statement released by DepEd last 20 October 2020 says, "Suicide is a sensitive and complex issue. We would like to appeal to everyone to stop directly connecting such to modules or distance learning."

Ensuing from the public's concerns and disapproval, CHED backtracked on 24 May, saying full face-to-face classes is still possible depending on the COVID-19 situation on the ground. The chair noted that "We have to make sure our facilities are COVID-resilient and if that is the case, we will allow face-to-face; that is the policy of the government...."

Education is a fundamental human right that serves as a bedrock of a peaceful, sustainable, and advanced society. It stands to reason to include Education at the center of planning in mitigating the impact of COVID-19. The pandemic is far from over. But, if anything, it also caused an unparalleled impact on Education while highlighting the huge gap that has long been present but overlooked. Our country's capacity to respond effectively and efficiently will hinge on the government's concerted efforts by forging ties with experts from cross-sectors & multi-stakeholders worldwide, and share a common goal that is to leave no learners behind. There is no other perfect time to take action and emerge stronger from this global crisis than *now*.



# YELLOW PAGE

CHRISTINE MAE PIÑERO

## RECOMMENDED APARTMENTS AND CONDOS FOR UCSM STUDENTS

### NAME OF ACCOMMODATION: BOARDWALK CITY RESIDENCES

**Name of Owner:** Sps. Ray and Venus Manigsaca  
**Contact Number:** 0942 473 2220  
**Address:** F. Zuellig Avenue, NRA, Mandaue City  
**Distance from UCSM:** ~1km (10mins walk)  
**Amenities:** Shuttle Service, Wifi, Common Pantry, GenSet, Elevator, 24/7 Security Guards with CCTV, Canteen, Laundry Services, Roofdeck Access, Card Key Access, Study Area  
**Monthly Room Rental:** Dormitory - Bedspace at Php5,000  
 Condominium - ranges Php15,000-P25,000



### NAME OF ACCOMMODATION: F.L.Y. BUILDING

**Name of Owner:** James Young  
**Contact Number:** 0917 325 3374  
**Address:** A. Del Rosario Street, Guizo, Mandaue City  
**Distance from UCSM:** ~1.2 km (10mins jeep ride)  
**Amenities:** Studio type, Aircon, Double-deck Bed, Balcony, Own CR  
**Monthly Room Rental:** Php 6,800-13,400

### NAME OF ACCOMMODATION: LAPUT RESIDENCES

**Name of Owner:** Jenna Laput  
**Contact Number:** 0932 797 4248  
**Address:** A. Del Rosario Street, Guizo, Mandaue City  
**Distance from UCSM:** ~1.2 km (10mins jeep ride)  
**Amenities:** Good for two w/ AC, CR, Sink, Cabinet, Double-deck Bed  
**Monthly Room Rental:** Php 5,500-6,000



### NAME OF ACCOMMODATION: VILLA ESPERANZA RESIDENCES

**Name of Owner:** Cenadelou Realty, Inc.  
**Contact Number:** (032) 346-9324 / 0932 874 7470  
**Address:** 287 A. Del Rosario St., Guizo, Mandaue City  
**Distance from UCSM:** ~2.2km (15mins jeep ride)  
**Amenities:** Aircon, Bed w/ mattress, Wardrobe, Refrigerator, Microwave Oven, Cooktop, Rangehood, Dining Set, Own CR w/ Water Heater, Parking Space, 24/7 security w/ CCTV, Peaceful Environment  
**Monthly Room Rental:** Php15,000 and up (offers free 1-month rental)

### NAME OF ACCOMMODATION: DAKA APARTELE

**Name of Owner:** Danilla Velasquez  
**Contact Number:** 0917 802 0080 / 032-384-1176  
**Address:** Subangdaku, Mandaue City  
**Distance from UCSM:** ~1.0 km (5mins drive)  
**Amenities:** All rooms are semi-furnished  
**Monthly Room Rental:** Studio w/o kitchen Php 6k, Studio w/ kitchen Php 9k, 1 bedroom Php 10k, 2 bedrooms Php 12.5k

### NAME OF ACCOMMODATION: LUIS AMIGO LADIES DORM

**Name of Owner:** Tertiary Capuchin Sisters  
**Contact Number:** 0917 631 2083  
**Address:** Pelaez St., Cebu City  
**Distance from UCSM:** ~2 rides away (30 mins)  
**Amenities:** All rooms are fully-furnished  
**Monthly Room Rental:** Php 8,300

### NAME OF ACCOMMODATION: URBAN DECA HOMES

**Name of Owner:** C/O Deca Management  
**Contact Number:** 0967 384 3175  
**Address:** Tipolo, Mandaue City  
**Distance from UCSM:** ~2.0 km (10min drive)  
**Amenities:** All rooms are semi-furnished  
**Monthly Room Rental:** Php 15,000



### NAME OF ACCOMMODATION: ROBINLAND

**Name of Owner:** C/O Robin Family  
**Contact Number:** 0917 700 2884  
**Address:** Mandaue City  
**Distance from UCSM:** ~1.0 km (5mins drive)  
**Amenities:** All rooms are semi-furnished  
**Monthly Room Rental:** Bedspace at Php 5,500

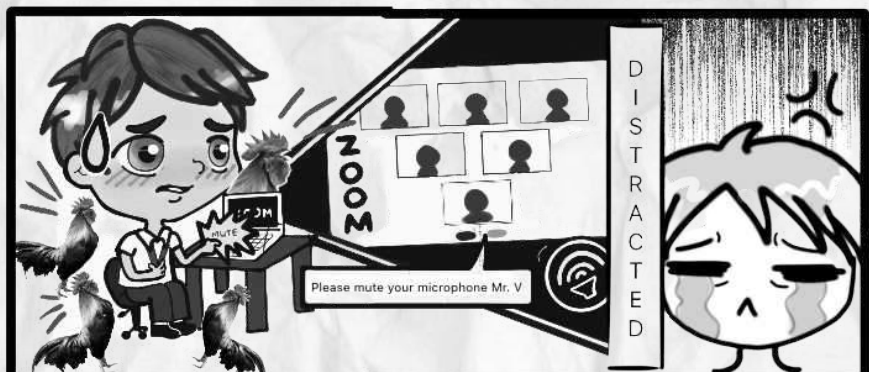
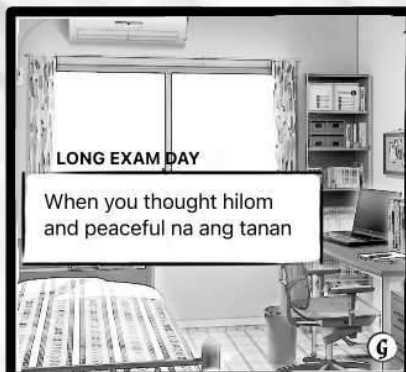
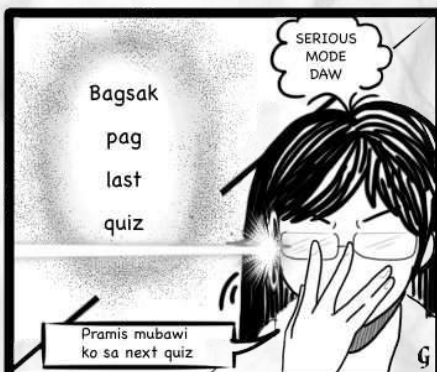
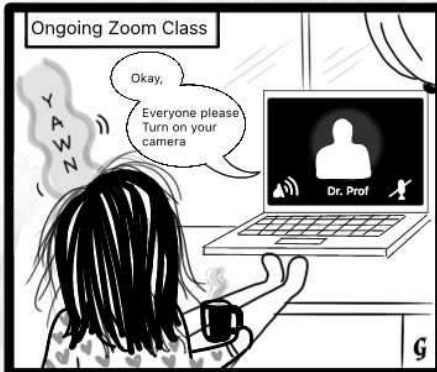
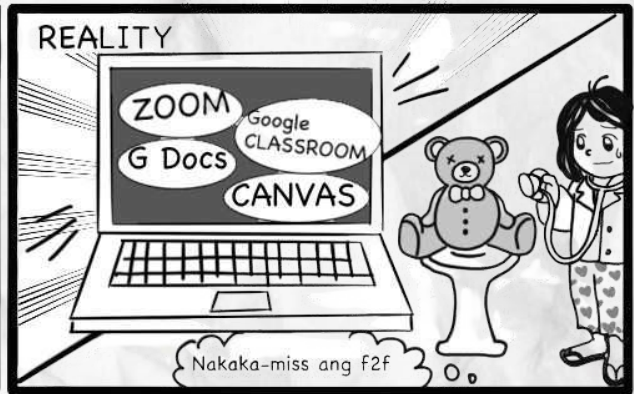
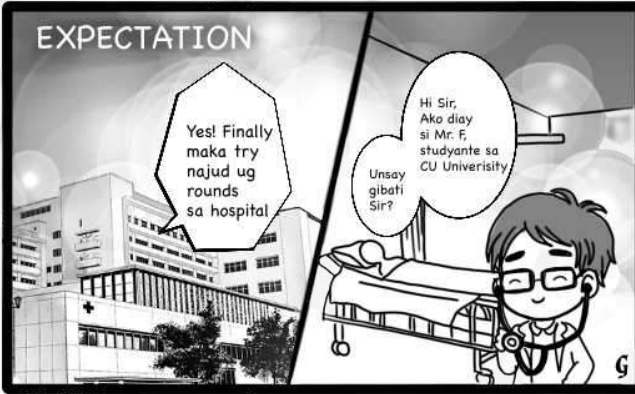
### NAME OF ACCOMMODATION: AZALEA PLACE

**Name of Owner:** C/o Azalea Management  
**Contact Number:** 0933 200 0000  
**Address:** Lahug, Cebu City  
**Distance from UCSM:** ~2.0 km (10mins drive)  
**Amenities:** All rooms are semi-furnished  
**Monthly Room Rental:** Starts at 15k





# e-SABAW MOMENTS







So, palatine tonsils are paired structures consisting of...

Piyong lang ko mga 2 mins lang

2 HOURS LATER...

Hmmm?

NANI!?!?!?

Kami nalang ni doc ang naa sa zoom!?

Bimonthly exams are so exhausting!! Let's refresh our skin~~

HALA!!! 7:30 NA!?!?

ALARM  
EXAM STARTS @ 7:30 AM  
7:30 AM  
SNOOZE

Good morning, everyone! Ready na for the exam?

Good morning, doc.  
Good morning, doc!

dooc, wait laaaang... :D

MAO TO ANG FASTEST SECONDS OF MAH LAYF ...

Noof!

AYAW LAGI PAGSINAMOK BA KAY GA KLASI PAMI!!!

Please mute yourself Mr. A. You're disturbing the class.

Kaulaw baaaa... nganung wala pajud nako na mute... huhu tabaaaang ~

Pharynx is a fibromuscular tubular organ extending from the base...

~ZONING OUT~  
Kaihion koooo... mag off-cam ko?? absenan mn daw ni doc pag mag off-cam... huhu  
Sakit na akong tiyan...  
What's for lunch?  
Katulgon lagi ka...

Are there any questions?

Okay. If none, we will end the meeting. I hope you're taking notes since this will be included in the exam.

Thank You!

WHHHAATT?!?

I hope you're taking notes since this will be included in the exam.  
I hope you're taking notes since this will be included in the exam.

Dooc, can you repeat everything? :D

Book? Check  
Notebook? Check  
Sticky notes? Check  
Pen and highlighters? Check  
Dictionary? Check

Okay! I'm ready to slay my exams! Victory is mine! Top 1 humanda ka!

Check lang nako ang socmed slight basin naay important announcement

AFTER 1 HOUR

Nalingaw na sa socmed....

HAHAH~  
HAHAH~  
Narrator: And nakalimut na nga mag study diay siya....  
THE END.

# THE SERVIAN **STAFF**

ACADEMIC YEAR 2020 - 2021

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We are joyful and humbled to publish the latest issue of *The Serviant* successfully. We consider this magazine a passion project crafted amidst a pandemic made possible by the opportunity and trust you have bestowed upon our team.

*The Editor-in-Chief* would like to personally thank the whole team for believing in her since day one.

"To the editors and artists who stayed with me until wee hours of the morning working on the content and layout: Exzel Lei, Myles Dominique, Joshmary, Gayl, Kissaine, Mark, and Abbe – your support and efforts were overwhelming! To our dear writers and contributors: Neuville, Iris, Venice, Patrizia, Che Ann, Yence, Jehd, Christine, Angel Anne, Nick, and Sol – you are greatly appreciated. Unsaon nalang kung wala mo?! Thank you, Team 4.0!"

*Soli Deo Gloria!*

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*SY 2019-2020:*  
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Batch Invictus  
Batch Invictus Block 2  
Batch Tritonos Block 5  
Medlympics Teams White, Blue, Gold  
Medlympics Frisbee Team  
The Serviant 2020

*SY 2020-2021:*  
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Batch Kairos Blocks 2, 3, 7  
Batch Invictus Block 8  
Batch Tritonos Clerks

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Student Pedagogical Society  
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Boardwalk Residences  
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THANK YOU!

THE  
SERVIANT

where passion meets the point of the pen

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University of Cebu  
School of Medicine  
*Driven to Excel, Driven to Serve*

# CONGRATULATIONS

TO OUR PIONEERING BATCH OF LICENSED PHYSICIAN  
WITH A **100% PASSING PERCENTAGE**  
PHYSICIAN LICENSURE EXAMINATION (NOVEMBER 2020 | MARCH 2021)

*in the habit of producing  
topnotchers and passers!*

## TOP 3



**CY JOHANN KENT J.  
ROMUGA, MD**



Dr. Cy Johann Kent J. Romuga, 3rd Placer in the March 2021 Physician Licensure Examination received his P500,000.00 cash award from UC President Atty. Augusto W. Go and Chancellor Ms. Candice Gotianuy. (Left to Right : Dr. Merci Uy - Chairman of DEPT Medicine, Dean Dr. Ma. Melfer R. Montoya, Dr. Cy Romuga, Ms. Candice Gotianuy, Atty. Augusto W. Go)

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