

SPEECH FOR SECRETARY FRANCISCO T. DUQUE III, MD, MSc. FOR THE 26th ANNUAL NATIONAL CONVENTION AND EXHIBITION OF THE PRIVATE HOSPITALS ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES

November 23, 2005 (Wednesday, 9:30 AM)
Centennial Hall, Manila Hotel

Theme: *PHAP Zooming Towards New Horizons*

PHAP President Dr. Antonio A. Chang, PHAP President Emeritus Dr. Carlos P. Crisostomo, Philhealth Vice President Dr. Eduardo Banzon, PHAP officers and members, my colleagues in the health sector, participants, a pleasant morning to all of us...

I am deeply overwhelmed by this day's gathering --- a convention of the pillars of health care putting their best foot forward, zooming in towards new horizons.

Private hospitals have long been the government's partner in tirelessly providing services to our people. With about 85 million Filipinos and still growing, the national and local government's efforts will all be insufficient. And we owe it all to you, our friends from the private sector, for filling in the gap and taking the risks that come along with it.

As health secretary, I know by heart all the hurdles you are trying to overcome in order to provide what is expected from our sector. What with the soaring prices of medicines and medical equipment...new and emerging illnesses and epidemics...the exodus of doctors and nurses to find greener pastures...and hurtful Congress bills meant to protect patient's rights while neglecting the inherent rights of hospitals and physicians. All these test the limits of our endurance, vitality and commitment in serving the Filipino people.

Let me linger a bit on the much talked about migration of doctors and nurses. The recent issue of the news magazine, *The Economist*, gave a new twist to the phenomenon of "brain drain"...looking at it as a possible "brain gain" at that. The author contends that we can look at its potential bright side --- landing a good job as a nurse or doctor outside of the country would lure more of our youth to pursue education in medicine and nursing. The net effect would be more investments in education, which is generally good for our country. As with other theories of human behavior, theory precedes evidence but this is one interesting angle to the issue at hand.

It is disheartening for me to learn that more of our private hospitals have closed down (from 1,061 private hospitals, only 1,058 are now operational). This is an enormous loss not only for us doctors or for other health workers, but more so for our *kababayans*. The services available for our public is hence further strained and limited which may push them to resort to "other means" to get well.

The Department of Health recognizes the need for urgent reforms. We know that we have to act now...redirect efforts...so we can focus our lens on directions that threatens the efficient delivery of health services.

We are definitely moving forward! And we are *zooming towards new horizons* together with you, our partners from PHAP. We shall do this with the paradigm of Fourmula One!

What is this paradigm?

Formula One is the new framework and the flagship program for the Department of Health. It is designed to implement critical health interventions with 3 main goals of achieving better health outcomes...a more responsive health system...and equitable health care financing.

We can liken this new paradigm to a racetrack that leads to better and equitable quality health services. To get to the finish line, we use the DOH as our vehicle. Now we have strengthened that old dependable car through the paradigm of Formula One. The four wheels that shall move us forward are the steel-belted wheels of 1) equitable health care financing, 2) health care regulations, 3) apt delivery of quality essential health services and 4) good governance in health.

Health financing will foster increased, better, and sustained investments in health. Health regulation will assure the quality and affordability of health goods and services. Health service delivery will enable our people to avail of basic essential health care where and when they actually need them. And good governance in health will enhance the performance of the whole health system.

We will implement these reforms not slowly and inefficiently...but with speed and precision!...keeping in mind that every wrong turn...every bit of hesitation may endanger our passengers...the Filipino public whom we serve.

To overcome our present challenges, we will have to synergize our efforts. Hospitals will have to see themselves as part of teams and not work in isolation. Public and private institutions will have to work more closely with each other and establish efficient referral networks. To survive, we have to complement gaps in expertise and health services and share best experiences in health care.

Quality is equally important. When the health sector increasingly faces the pressure of rising public expectation and consumerism, we need to be up to our toes in driving down the best health outcomes. Quality is the means by which we put our values and standards in a pedestal. It is the shield with which we defend our integrity as managers and leaders in the health sector. This is our timely answer to hurtful Bills in Congress which look down on our integrity and social responsibility as leaders of health...this is how we win back the declining faith of our people.

Let us therefore work towards a common goal --- towards achieving quality "health for all." We may have different means but we can hold hands in joint efforts, complimenting each other to make our jobs easier and our responsibilities lighter.

So continue communicating with us. We can drive our vehicle in the right direction. We can overcome obstacles such as the fragmentation in the health system, inequity in healthcare, and the cycle of poverty and ill-health. Working together, we can zoom towards new horizons!

Thank you very much.

