

On the road to universal health care

Leopoldo J Vega¹

¹Office of the Medical Center Chief, Southern Philippines Medical Center, JP Laurel Ave, Davao City, Philippines

Correspondence

Leopoldo J Vega
coh.spmc@gmail.com

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The Medical Director of Southern Philippines Medical Center reports on the hospital's contributions towards attaining universal health care.

Southern Philippines Medical Center (SPMC) has gone through a positive change. We have taken the challenge of pursuing the Universal Health Care (UHC) or *Kalusugan Pangkalahatan* (KP) agenda of the Department of Health,¹ which aims to improve access to quality health care services among Filipinos, especially those in the lower socioeconomic strata. As the Medical Director of SPMC, I have always been confident in accepting this challenge since the agenda is perfectly aligned with our mission to provide equitable and affordable health care services.

Financial risk protection through health care insurance is the cornerstone of UHC.² SPMC has documented a steady increase in Philippine Health Care Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) coverage rate among the patients that we saw, from 33.02% in 2009 to 82.18% by the end of 2015. SPMC had subsidized the excess health care costs of 58,927 patients through the PhilHealth no-balance-billing (NBB) scheme³ from 2014 to 2015. This hospital subsidy to patient care has been increasing since 2014, with a mean annual cost of PHP 188M in 2014 to 2015, or 34% of the mean annual actual health care cost for the patients on NBB (PHP 554M) during those years. From 2012 to 2015, a total of 155 patients in SPMC have also availed of the PhilHealth Z-Benefit Packages for illnesses and procedures with exceptionally high costs of health care (i.e., breast cancer, acute lymphocytic leukemia, coronary artery bypass graft, ventricular septal defect, tetralogy of Fallot, and kidney transplant).⁴ We have also implemented the PhilHealth Point of Care (POC) enrolment program⁵ in SPMC. So far, we have purchased the health insurance premiums of 24,472 patients since the start of the POC enrolment implementation in 2013 up to the end of 2015. Finally, through the SPMC Medical Assistance Program (MAP), we have spent a total of PHP 178M to cover the health care costs of 72,238 patients who availed of the program benefits from 2014 to 2015.

We envision for SPMC to be “a world-class, service-oriented medical center.” I believe that, in pursuing the UHC agenda, we are given the opportunity to realize the practical purpose of our vision—to play a major role in delivering world-class health services to the poor and disadvantaged.

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implementation in SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES MEDICAL CENTER

