



Adventist Hospital Palawan, Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, Philippines.

Photo courtesy of AHP archives.

Adventist Hospital Palawan

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Adventist Hospital Palawan, also dubbed as “A Happy Place,” is a non-profit organization owned and operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, specifically under the North Philippine Union Conference. It is renowned for providing outstanding medical care and services for the people in the Philippines’ Westernmost islands. It has been operating since 1988.¹

Strategically located at the intersection of the two major roads of the province, it has become a famous landmark. In fact, the term “Adventist Hospital” is a household phrase in Palawan.² Known for its excellent service for almost 33 years through struggles and triumphs, it is referred to as the best and most caring hospital in the province. In fact, for some locals, it is not simply a place for physical healing. It is a place where they can find emotional and spiritual security, peace, and comfort while, for others, it is a good place for friendship. That is why it is always the peoples’ *first* choice.

Developments that Lead to the Establishment of the Institution

In November 1973, Dr. Alejandro Santiago pioneered the Adventist medical ministry in Palawan at the request of the Central Luzon Mission of Seventh-day Adventists, headed by Pastor Benjamin Martin, then the Mission’s president. A one-room clinic was set up in Puerto Princesa City, the provincial capital of Palawan. It was the barest of facilities, though not lacking in adaptive, innovative, and makeshift qualities. Its positive medical reputation along with the Adventist health philosophy spread and rippled out to the sparse inhabitants of the city and all the rest of the province.

After two years of exemplary witnessing, through God’s bountiful grace, the Mission purchased a two-hectare lot located strategically at the crossroads of the North and South Highways leading to the capital city known as Junction 2. This was to be the site of the future Palawan Adventist Hospital.

Towards the end of the 1970s, when Palawan’s offshore oil prospecting fueled visions of black gold and big-box in everyone’s head, the province began to experience a steady and increasing influx from the Visayan islands and war-torn Mindanao. Coupled with this, boatloads of Vietnamese refugees who paid dearly to flee their oppression added to the growing city’s population.

Consequently, the Mission recognized the surging need for competent medical and dental services, especially when a former missionary – Dr. Terry R. Schmunk, a dentist from Oakland, Maryland – visited the Vietnamese Refugee Camp in the city and strongly recommended the establishment of a medical institution to serve the demands of the area. But who to send? Several potential pioneers were approached by the North Philippine Union Mission and Central Luzon Mission through the Manila Sanitarium and Hospital, but most were not available, some were daunted by the task, and others were just not interested. Dr. David M. Domondon, then president of Manila Sanitarium and Hospital, through God’s leading, saw the potential of one man of choice who already had proven his worth by helping to put up Bacolod Sanitarium and Hospital. That man was Dr. Orville B. Varona, who fortunately accepted the call.

The travel to Palawan itself was a test of faith and patience to them. Due to some difficult circumstances, they needed to stay at the Northern Philippine Union Conference (NPUC). Dr. and Mrs. Varona assisted the Vietnamese leaders when they were facing challenges in transporting their goods to Palawan. Due to this expressed kindness, the good Lord touched the heart of these people. The Vietnamese leaders, upon knowing

that Dr. Varona is heading to Palawan for a mission of starting a hospital, donated all their medical laboratory equipment amounting to 2 million pesos.

In August of 1982, the Varonas, followed by the Villaba and Serenio families and later Salmon Pementel and Tessie Gara, moved to Puerto Princesa City to commence the long, challenging job of starting a formal medical ministry.

In 1983, they rented a 1,000 square meter land with a six bedroom unit capable of handling the necessities of the starting clinic. On the first floor were the business office, doctor's office for consultations, laboratory, and X-ray. Since they were in a starting medical facility, the staff found themselves handling two or three tasks, each coupled with the fact that working overtime was more of the rule rather than the exception. Nevertheless, all their needs were met.

From the very start, Dr. Terry Schmunk, Dr. Eugene Hilderbrand, and Mr. Mahlon Harris, president, medical director, and procurement officer respectively of the Volunteer Health Professionals (VHP), an independent, non-profit Adventist organization based in California, helped tremendously through donations of hospital equipment, medical and dental supplies, and more, including two Honda motorcycles for errands.

They were also responsible for the moral support during those hard times, and the energetic promotion, advertising, and coordination in the United States that generated financial health and professional services over the succeeding months and years.

October 10, 1982, Sunday at 10:00 a.m., was considered the birth date of the permanent Adventist Medical work in Palawan. On this day, barely two months after the clinic staff "landed," the formal opening of the Palawan Medical Clinic at 33 Abad Santos Street, together with the groundbreaking ceremony at Junction 2, Barangay San Pedro, both in Puerto Princesa City, took place.

Among those present were Elder Dan A. Roth, associate secretary; Mr. Mervyn Hardinge, health director; and Elder Richard O'Fill, SAWS director--all three from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Washington, D.C.; Dr. Everet W. Witzel, health director of the Far Eastern Division (FED) in Singapore; Pastor Nestor R. Arit, president of the North Philippine Union Mission; Dr. David M. Domondon, president of the Manila Sanitarium and Hospital' and local government officials including Mayor Feliberto R. Oliveros, Jr., and Doctor Alejandro M. Santiago, councilor.

Since that time, the clinic has grown steadily, adding a few hospital beds and rooms, more equipment, and performing minor and major operations in its improvised operating room setup.

Many professionals under VHP and other private individuals have spent a few weeks at one time or another, helping in any and every way. Among those individuals were Dr. and Mrs. Clayton Potts, Dr. and Mrs. Ted L. Stephens, Dr. and Mrs. Peter Nelson, Dr. and Mrs. Kenneth Nelson, Miss Debbie Whiteman, Dr. and Mrs. Frank Shaffer, Dr. and Mrs. James Wise, Dr. and Mrs. Wilburt Ingham, Dr. and Mrs. Milford J. Anholm, Mr. and Mrs. Olof

Moline, Mr. D. L. Clymer, Dr. Gary Pritchett, Dr. and Mrs. Rey Munsey, Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Emde, Dr. Wilmer Buller, Mr. David A. Pultz, Mr. Phil K. Ashton, Dr. Joel Sabangan, Dr. Joseph Gulfan, Dr. and Mrs. Willis Dick, Miss Resy Mendoza, Mrs. Cynthia Castro, several Loma Linda University medical and dental faculty and students, and many others. The Quiet Hour Ministries also contributed to the financing.

In 1983, Architect Ruben Profacio drew up the floor plan of the hospital and satellite clinics, with two up north at Port Barton and Calawag, and one down South at Tacras.

That plan along with the feasibility of the project was submitted to a multi-sectarian, non-profit foundation based in Bonn, West Germany – EvangelischeZentra-stelle Für Entwicklungshilfe E.V. – also known as the Protestant Central Agency for Development Aide or “EZE” for short – as an application for possible funding.

Regardless of the availability of outside financing, however, the clinic staff was determined to put up the hospital out of its earnings, little by little, slowly but surely. A warehouse and maintenance building was erected and dedicated on November 12, 1983. Construction materials such as lumber, gravel, and sand were stockpiled in preparation for the main building construction.

In March 1984, Mr. Heinz D. Haverkom, of the EZE and Elder R.I. Gainer, treasurer of the FED, surveyed the Junction 2 site and assessed the viability of future hospital operations.

While waiting for the EZE’s approval, the clinic continued its service to Puerto Princesa’s community. It also began accepting monthly rotations of Medical and Medical Technology interns from the Manila Sanitarium, who enjoyed the good food, the camaraderie with the workers, and the easy pace of life. The experience gained in usually improvising on medical treatment was invaluable.

In March 1987, after a few details were ironed out by the EZE, FED, and the Clinic along with two organizations, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) under Elder Robert R. Dranchenberg, Elder Haroldo J. Seidl, and Dr. John F. Sipkens; and Maranatha Flights International (MFI) under Mr. Don Noble and Mr. Van VandenHeuvel, the application for financial support from the EZE was approved and 1.575 million Deutsche Marks (almost US\$ 1 million) equivalent to 75 percent of the total hospital construction costs began to flow into the project, ushering the hospital’s adolescent stage of rapid physical growth. Mr. Don M. Wolfe of MF was the construction superintendent for a few months until Mr. Richard K. Ekkens, also of MFI, took over in July. Mr. VandenHeuvel continued to provide the overall supervision through frequent visits to the site.

Of course, the physical structure of a hospital is only part of the story. What has largely been left untold, the people of Palawan will forever be grateful for the many, many unselfish persons who have sacrificed money, time, and effort to realize these dreams.

And so, on June 16, 1988, the Palawan Adventist Hospital in Junction 2, San Pedro, Puerto Princesa City, was inaugurated. The dream of building an Adventist medical institution in Palawan was realized through the benevolence, determination, and dedication of many selfless individuals. These persons braved the long,

arduous, and uncertain task of creating the future of Adventist medical work in the islands of Palawan.³⁴

The former Palawan Medical Clinic communicates its priorities and purposes through the institution's mission statement: "We are dedicated to providing excellent healthcare by delivering reliable and efficient services through committed, well-trained staff and state-of-the-art medical facilities and further the health and well-being of people leading them to Jesus Christ the great Physician."

With the growing popularity of Palawan, particularly in the City of Puerto Princesa, more migrants have flocked to the city day after day. The healing ministry is therefore in full swing and through God's providence, the previously 35-bed hospital had times when it could no longer accommodate all of its current clients, so an expansion was built to a 50-bed capacity in 1997.

Type of Medical Services throughout the Years

Throughout the years, Adventist Hospital Palawan has continued to provide evidence-based and promising health care services and interventions specifically designed to meet the unique needs of each person. The institution offers 24-Hour Ambulance Services, 24-Hour Emergency Services, 24-Hour Pharmacy Services, Dermatology Services, Diagnostic Imaging Services, Dental Services, Anesthesiology, Burn Unit, Dietetics and Nutrition, Hearing Center, Eye Center, Endoscopy Center, High-Risk Pregnancy Unit, Intensive Care Unit, Medicine, Laboratory Services, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Outpatient Services, Pediatrics, Renal Care Unit, Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Center, Surgery; and other related services such as Cafeteria Services, Corporate Health Agreement Management Program (Champ), Chaplaincy and Counseling Services, Health Food Production, Nurse Training Program, Palawan Adventist Technical-Vocational Institute (PATVI), and Water Refilling Station. In addition, AHP now offers a Drive-Thru Laboratory and Pharmacy Services for the safety and convenience of the patients and workers as well.⁵

The one leading donor of the hospital particularly in recent years has been the SPEX (Service Provider Excellence).

Important Leadership Tenures

From 2003 to 2004, Dr. Isagani L. Manuel, past president and CEO, has led Adventist Hospital Palawan in a meaningful though short service. It was during his leadership that the Food Factory Department opened to the public.

Dr. Chuck Loreto O. Garcia, president/CEO, during his term from 2005 to 2011, has made the following highlights for the betterment of the hospital:

2005 ISO 9001:2000 Certification Grant by TUV – SUD Philippines

2008 Completion of the 11 room garden suites

Completion of the renovation of the Dietary, Admin office, NICU, and ICU

2009 Implementation of BIZBOX hospital system

Purchase of Hospital Van⁶

2010 Groundbreaking of the new extension building

Mother-Baby Friendly Hospital⁷

From 2011 to 2015, Adventist Hospital-Palawan had the following accomplishments, improvements, and changes through the leadership of their former president and CEO, Dr. Melvyn F. Orbe.⁸ The hospital had amended its By-Laws and Articles of Incorporation in 2011 and adopted it on May 29, 2011.

The hospital bed capacity, as licensed by the Department of Health, was increased from 50 beds in 2011, to 53 beds in 2012, to 90 beds in 2013 until 2015. The hospital was at category level 3 from 2011 to 2012, while from 2013 to 2015, it ascended to category level 2. For the past five years, the hospital has maintained its ISO 9001 accreditation with TUV SUD PSB Philippines.

The hospital's determination to serve quality health care to its patients was greatly facilitated with the acquisition of the following:

2011 Clinical Centrifuge and Binocular Microscope for the Laboratory

Infant Pulse Oximeter for the NICU

Water Filter System for the Dietary Department

Portable X-ray machine

Two units of Oxygen Regulator (NICU)

Php 95,000 worth of Operating Room instruments

Mobile Patient Monitor and Cautery Machine (Valley Lab)

Purchase of Hospital accessories such as Bipolar Forceps, Laparoscopic Grasper; Laparoscopic Angle, Irrigating Solution Set, Versaport,

Laboratory Equipment for Blood Bank and Microbiology;

Operating Lights installed

Purchase of Incubator

Colonoscope

Gastroscope, and EEG

Heavy-duty washing machine

2012 Submersible Pumps; Digital X-ray

2013 Siemens Somatom 16 – slice CT scan

Stress Test Machine

2014 Anaesthesia machine (HealforceAnaeston 5000)

2015 Spiral Mixer Oven

Rotary LPB (48 Trays Capacity)

Soya Milk Maker

Meat Grinder

NICU Phototherapy Unit

Apheresis machine for the blood bank

PT Electrotherapy

Vein Finder

Dental Chair

The new services offered includes the Blood Bank, Institute for Prevention of Ocular Disease, Oncology Unit, Endoscopy Unit, CHIP, Industrial Clinic, Hyperbaric Chamber, Malampaya Burn Unit, and Dialysis Clinic. Major renovations completed include the CTC Coordinator's Office construction and was installed with two split-type air conditioners. The OR Dressing Room has also been reconstructed. As per DOH requirements, the hospital morgue was built. The repair of PT Room, Chaplaincy, Social Work Office, Treatment Room, NS 1 and 2, ICU and Isolation Room, OB Ward, NICU, Burn Unit, Labor and Delivery Room, Atrium (Roofing), Admin, OPD, and Dialysis Clinic was approved.⁹

The repair of the old building increased the hospital's capacity to 90 beds. Also, the new four-story medical complex building became fully operational, adding twenty-four (24) beds to the total bed capacity. The Finance, Diagnostic Imaging, Clinical Laboratory, Dental, and Administrative departments were also transferred and fully settled in their new working areas. From the year 2016 up to the time of this writing, through the competent leadership of Mr. Elias Y. Apacible Jr., president/CEO, with the selfless support of the Administrative Council and Board Member, Adventist Hospital Palawan has stepped on the ladder of successes, particularly in conquering the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the same year, the hospital did not only focus on its physical transformation but also supported the spiritual revival and reformation ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Hospital-sponsored evangelistic efforts reaped four souls baptized at Brgy. Sta. Lourdes, Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, on April 3-16, 2016, while three souls were baptized at Quezon, Palawan on October 6-15, 2016.¹⁰

Notable improvements on hospital facilities and equipment include the newly offered services such as Renal Care Unit and Ear Diagnostic Centre; Newly acquired vehicles such as L300 for Food Factory Department Deliveries and 1 unit ambulance; Newly acquired machines including the HISCL-800 (Sysmex) for Immunochemistry especially for Blood Bank use, Dimension-Xpand (Siemens) Chemistry Analyzer, 1 unit Ultrasound, 1 Suction Machine, 2 Cautery Machine, 2 Defibrillator, 4 units Nikkiso DBB-27C (Hemodialysis Machine), and a fire sprinkler.

In 2017, the hospital's newly acquired machines were: 1 unit Direct Radiography System - P2.7M; 750KVA generator set (P3, 350,000.00); 1 unit GE Machine for 2DEcho procedures (P2,650,000.00); Endoscopy Unit (P2.9M);

1 unit Elevator (P3.9M); 1 unit Nikkiso Dialysis Machine (P850,000.00); and 1 unit Super Grandia (P2.2M). Also, the third and fourth floors of the hospital were completed, and new building expansion was proposed.

In 2018, the hospital acquired one of its most valuable assets--the MRI with a worth of 60 million pesos. The administrators decided to purchase the 5000 sqm at San Pedro, Puerto Princesa City (15 Million Pesos); 1004 sqm at San Pedro, Puerto Princesa City (3.12 Million Pesos); and 2906 sqm at San Jose, Puerto Princesa, City (7.2 Million Pesos). During the same year, Adventist Hospital Palawan was accredited as a Mother-Baby Friendly Health Facility on July 18, 2018.¹¹

In 2019, the hospital purchased the following: Digital Mammography, Portable 2D Echo Machine, House and Lot – 600sqm, a Mitsubishi Adventure, and other medical equipment.

In the first six months of 2020, the hospital held its ribbon cutting ceremony for its newly obtained digital mammography, new accounting office, new administrative smart office, new outpatient pediatric clinic, new PT clinic, converted a ward unit to a respiratory unit, and also converted the AHP School, PATVI to a COVID-19 High-risk Isolation Facility, and an ambulance for the Adventist Clinic in El Nido. The hospital also purchased property for the future expansion in Narra and new dialysis machines. A concrete roadway was built in front of the hospital for the convenience of both the workers and the patients as well as their families.¹²

Branch and Satellite Facilities

At the height of the pandemic, a new Adventist clinic in El Nido was opened and was officially inaugurated on November 7, 2020.¹³ Through the leadership of the present Administrative Council, if God permits, a new clinic in Narra and Taytay, Palawan, will be opening soon.

Physicians and Staff Throughout the Years

The first set of pioneers sent in 1982 were Dr. Orvillo B. Varona (medical director); Ester Cherrie G. Varona, Midwife (head, Medical Records); Samson B. Villalba (X-ray technician); Abigail C. Villalba, Nurse (staff nurse); Antonio R. Serenio (accountant); Himaya Marcelina R. Serenio (staff nurse); Teresita C. Gara (pharmacist); Samson S. Pimental (medical technologist); Dr. Ponciano E. Malit, Jr. (dentist); Aloha P. Malit (staff nurse); Daniel S. Siglos (Maintenance); Daisy Dale D. Bataculin (staff nurse); Conception Q. To-ong (nutritionist); and Dr. Nida Gloria D. Villanueva (staff physician).

Today, the hospital has a total of five hundred and eighty (560) employees including health care professionals and support staff.¹⁴ It has 162 patient beds, a 9-bed Emergency Room, an operating theatre, and well-equipped diagnostics services.¹⁵ It has a total of 121 accredited physicians, offering a wide range of specialization.

Fields of expertise include Anesthesiology; Neuroanesthesiology; Clinical Optometry; Dental; Dermatology; Family medicine; Pathology; Radiology; General Surgery; Neurosurgery; Laparoscopic surgery; Surgical Oncology; Hepatopancreatobiliary; Adult cardiology; Nephrology; Gastroenterology; Adult Neurology; Neurology; Cardiology – Intensive Care Medicine; Clinical Neurophysiology; Hematology; Lifestyle Medicine; Pulmonology; Infectious Disease; Cardiology – Vascular; Medical Oncology; Diabetology; Endocrinology; Medical Oncology; Obstetrics and Gynecology; Ophthalmology; Orthopaedics Surgery; Ear, Nose, and Throat; Cosmetic Surgery; Pediatrics; Urology and Vascular.

Partnership

The Adventist Hospital Palawan has been long engaging in mutual and strategic partnerships with other private and public companies in and outside the city. It has been collaborating with 52 HMOs and 58 more companies including hotels, mining, fast food, clinic, airlines, birthing homes, banks, resorts, associations, navy, and more. Every year, AHP conducts an Annual Physical Examination (APE) packed with Nutrition and Lifestyle Counseling, Meal Planning, and Weight Management through the FREEdom Days program created and owned by the hospital itself. Also, the Karada Scan Body Composition Monitor adds to the excitement of the employees. Moreover, the hospital has adopted one of the Barangays in the city as a partner in advocating a healthy lifestyle.

Notable Patients Treated

Geraldine, aka Miracle Girl, was healed by a miracle. Geraldine is a 7-year-old girl. She became ill and was taken to various treatments in the town of Puerto Princesa, but no one could heal her. When Geraldine's parents heard that Doctor Varona was coming home from America, they headed straight to the airport to meet him. Immediately, they went to Adventist Medical Clinic. The child has undergone laboratory testing and based on the results, she was ill with Falcifarum plus 4 Malaria, Pneumonia, Liver abscess, and four more diseases. One of the American doctors said that in two hours, the child would be dead. For all, there was no hope for the child to live, and only a miracle could help her. Geraldine's mother decided to remove all her lifelines, and she cuddled her. It was 5:00 a.m. when someone suddenly touched Doctor Varona, asking for food. He was so amazed to see the child standing beside him. It was "as if she has not gotten sick," he added. They called the American doctors, and upon seeing the child, all of them decided to be converted to Adventism. Indeed, it was a great miracle. Later it was found out that these doctors from America intentionally came to Palawan Adventist Clinic to atone themselves and to serve the Lord.

Another patient worth mentioning was the prisoner in Iwahig, Palawan. He failed his escape, and thus he was punished to death. He incurred major organ damage in his brain, lungs, heart, and liver, and it seemed impossible for him to live. According to the Adventist missionaries, Dr. Varona and his team, only a miracle could

restore him. The combined prayer and medical expertise brought the man healing. This opened the way to freedom in preaching inside the prison and later to the building of the church.¹⁶

These amazing testimonies were publicized and became an effective tool in captivating the hearts of the Palaweños. Today, Adventist Hospital Palawan has served as a home for the healing of people from all walks of life, including public and private officials such as the governor, mayor, councilors, lawyers, Barangay captains, engineers, doctors, company owners, teachers, businessmen, businesswoman, and more.

Alterations to the Original Mission

Adventist Hospital Palawan is strongly committed to responding to the constant and rising demands of being a hospital in the community. Therefore, on October 15, 2013, the mission and vision of the hospital were revisited for expansion. The recommendation and approval of the Administrative Council and Board Member have set the new mission to “Sharing God’s Love through Healing” and the new vision to “Adventist Medical Center – Palawan – the globally competitive Christ-centered healthcare and Training facility.” The team has also added the 7 Core Values: trust in God, commitment, compassion, integrity, safety, social Responsibility, and excellence.¹⁷

Schools Associated with the Institution

Adventist Hospital – Palawan Inc. is an institution accredited by TESDA offering Technical and Vocational Education and Training Courses (TVET) under the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). The school has been operating for five years now and has always been known to produce caregivers, nursing aides, and pharmacy aides who have skills that match the best from around the world.

Challenges and Issues the Institution Has Faced

Adventist Hospital Palawan has faced many challenges and issues ranging from leadership to various operational items. Today, AHP is an ISO 9001:2015 QMS certified institution and is in the progress of complying with the Integrated Management Systems requirements of ISO 14001:2015 Environmental management systems and ISO 45001:2018 Occupational Health and safety. The compliance and conformity challenge is continuing as the hospital commits to continual improvement.

In 2020, as the pandemic was evolving, AHP accepted the challenge to build a clinic facility in El Nido, Palawan, which is about 270 km away from the hospital. Operational challenges were numerous. The site was inside an environmentally protected area and is covered by a special law, Republic Act 11038. Distance, special law on top of the regular regulatory laws, and the pandemic provided a seemingly insurmountable obstacle. However, in less than five months, AHP was able to operationalize and launch amid the pandemic, the clinic with a 24-hour

emergency service, with a dedicated brand-new ambulance, pharmacy, laboratory, x-ray, etc. The launching event was attended by the El Nido Mayor, Vice Mayor, and other municipality officials, officers of the El Nido Chamber of Commerce and Industry among others.

Today, AHP continues to confront challenges as another Adventist Clinic in Narra, about 88 km from the hospital, is being developed. Recently, another facility in Brooke's Point, about 190 km from the hospital, is being coordinated with the municipality mayor.¹⁸

Breakthroughs in Research, Treatments, Innovation, or Technology

In today's highly competitive marketplace, Adventist Hospital Palawan during the pandemic has five service innovations and projects:

Freedom Days, a program about "A life free from diseases" in San Pedro.¹⁹

At the height of the pandemic, AHP set up a special triage. This triage is particularly important to separate patients likely to be infected. The city mayor cited AHP as an example of surge preparation.

AHP is expanding its medical missionary work through a clinic at El Nido, Palawan Island.

A separate pediatric clinic was also provided to ensure the health and safety of young patients during the COVID-19 pandemic.

AHP operated teleservices like teleconsultation and quick patient services like drive-thru laboratory, pharmacy, and x-ray. This was recognized by the city as valuable especially during the pandemic. Drive-thru Laboratory and Pharmacy aim to provide a convenient option to patients.

AHP maintains its ISO 9001:2015 QMS Certification with Zero Non-conformity during the latest remote audit conducted. The hospital seeks to further improve its management systems to achieve triple ISO Certification.

Awards for Areas of Distinction

In 2020, Adventist Hospital Palawan (AHP) received the 2021 Mayor's Award "Frontline Medical Heroes of the Year" and "Most Valuable Innovation."²⁰ The Puerto Princesa City Mayor publicly cited AHP as a role model for the surge preparation during the pandemic. The local city government has also chosen AHP to educate the people about COVID-19. The AHP service teams ministered to all intra-city front-liners through food and prayers. AHP was featured many times in TV and radio programs. The city mayor not only invited AHP staff to join the City Response Team for COVID-19 but also endorsed the AHP advocacies with the assistance of the vice-mayor, councilors, and barangay chairman. Even the regional Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) has been

asking AHP to share how it can manage progressively amidst the pandemic. In 2018, AHP was recognized by the city mayor for participating in a mega-clinic in the city coliseum.²¹

AHP is one of the top 10 Level II hospitals in the Philippines as recognized by the Department of Health during the 2019 Hospital Star Awards. A day after the 2019 Hospital Star Awards, AHP was requested to present best practices in a national event of DOH.

Humanitarianism and Pro Bono Services

As a part of the hospital's commitment to the welfare of its workers, free meals and Vitamin C are provided to all frontliners until the city is declared COVID-19 free.²²

AHP provided help through the program known as "Ang Healthy Pabigas" ("Special Leave without Pay").²³ AHP also implemented a labor cost reduction program called "A Happy Pledge" in which the workers donated their salaries to the hospital's outreach programs. The Administrative Council members donated 25 percent of their salary during the pandemic as an example of leadership.²⁴

Currently, AHP is hosting a Virtual COVID-19 Support Group through Facebook and Zoom to serve as a sharing platform and a multi-hospital informal emotional support group for the employees of the 10 Adventist hospitals. In addition, it is co-hosting a multi-hospital worship service as well. AHP is about "Always Helping People" to "Accomplish His Purpose."

AHP has been conducting "Week of Prayer" Services through the Chaplaincy Department. Last year (2020), they hosted the "Chaplaincy Media Evangelism Program".²⁵ Furthermore, the program "Ang Himig ng Pagibig" has been added to their services which showcase the talents of individuals who love serving the Lord.

Employee Engagement Programs

AHP started an employee engagement program in January 2017 through the Human Capital Department. It is known as #AHappinessProgram where selected employees, mostly rank and file, are given the opportunity to lead and inspire. Every month, a Happiness Princess or Princess, King or Queen will create activities, decorate the hospital's lobby which will serve as a photo booth, and hand out tokens and food to all the employees of the hospital.

Through these programs, employees from different departments have a platform to showcase their talents, creativity, and leadership and at the same time engage all employees through contests and games. Some of the programs conducted include "A Happy Chef," Family Feud, Slogan or Poster-making Contest, Serenading, Special Mother's and Father's Day, concerts, and gift-giving. Two activities became highlight during the happiness programs--the "Bazaar for a Cause" for typhoon victims and the "AHP Night Market," where every participating department is funded to help them earn profits through their products.²⁶

Even amid the pandemic, the Happiness Programs continued through virtual platforms. It is the goal of Human Capital, Labor-Management Corporation, and appointed Princes and Princesses to bring hope, health, and happiness to the employees of Adventist Hospital Palawan whether in the old or new normal.²⁷

Awards and Honors

Adventist Hospital Palawan has achieved historical milestones and various achievements throughout the decades. It has maintained an excellent service, a steady flow of innovations, and continuous expansions through organic growth and acquisitions which prove that the sacrifices of the pioneers were not in vain.

“A Best Hospital”

Adventist Hospital Palawan was a DOH Star Awardee, recognized as one of the top 10 Level II hospitals in the country by the Department of Health of the Philippines on September 17, 2019, during the DOH Hospital Star Awards, which are based on Safety & Infection Control, Service Provision, Customer and Employee Satisfaction, Community-based activities, and Quality Improvements.²⁸

“Outstanding LMC for Industrial Peace”

Adventist Hospital Palawan was recognized as one of the nine finalists among the companies in the country in the search for the DOLE NCMB Most Outstanding Labor-Management Cooperation for Industrial Peace.²⁹

Mayor’s Award

Adventist Hospital Palawan (AHP) received the Mayor’s 2021 Awards “Frontline Medical Heroes of the Year” and “Most Valuable Innovation.” In 2020, Puerto Princesa Mayor publicly cited the AHP as a model to be followed for the surge preparation during the pandemic.

Historical Role of the Institution

Adventist Hospital Palawan has always aimed to provide the highest quality and the best healthcare service to its patients. The hospital believed that the only way to achieve this is to render care that is excellent yet full of compassion.

For 25 years, the hospital built the bridge that sturdily connects compassion and competence. With its motto “Sharing God’s Love through Healing,” the hospital focused on touching and healing all aspects of a patient’s life by employing the best practices of modern healthcare rendered by the loving heart and hands of Christ-centered healthcare givers.

Outlook

AHP stands out not only for its awards and achievements but because of its heart to serve and its commitment to the mission.

With its unwavering commitment, AHP actively pursues to fulfill its mission of “Sharing God’s Love through Healing” to the residents and its visitors from all around the globe. It aims to provide quality healthcare services to all patients from all walks of life, and safety and excellent care for patients & staff shall remain steadfast.

AHP envisions being the premier Christ-centered, globally competitive healthcare training facility – the facility that fosters the following attributes to its workers: a strong sense of teamwork, innovation, motivation, loyalty, resilience, and cooperation. It hopes to instill in their hearts the significance of being a missionary in a sin-sick world.

Alongside its mission, vision, and core values, AHP inculcates the meaning of Christ-likeness, of being filled with His love and the Holy Spirit through spiritual programs, thus introducing Jesus Christ as the Source of Life.

Amid challenging times and unpredictable economic trends, Adventist Hospital Palawan still stands as a witness of God’s Goodness. It will continue to shine and bring hope, health, and happiness to the patients, workers, families, suppliers, and society as well.

Names of the Institution

The change of name of the institution has had to do with the administration and attention to the quality of service it provides. It also blends in the trend of naming the institutions of hospitals owned and operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Mission.

From its inception until the year 1988, Adventist Hospital Palawan was named Palawan Medical Clinic.

Palawan Medical Clinic was inaugurated on June 16, 1988. Right after the ceremonial induction of the new facility, it was changed to Palawan Adventist Hospital with Dr. Orvillo Varona as its first president/medical director.³⁰

In 2005, the Administrative Council along with the Board of Directors approved it to be called Palawan Adventist Incorporated.

On May 8, 2012, it was finally approved to be called Adventist Hospital Palawan Incorporated, the current name.³¹

AHP is one of the 10 Seventh-day Adventist hospitals in the Philippines under the Adventist International Health Systems-Philippines, which is under the Adventist International Health Systems-Asia of the Southern Asia Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists.³²

Presidents/Medical Directors

Palawan Medical Clinic: Dr. Orvillo B. Varona (President, 1982–1987).

Palawan Adventist Hospital: Dr. Orvillo B. Varona (president/medical director, 1988–2002); Dr. Isagani L. Manuel (president/medical director, 2003 – 2004); Dr. Chuck Loreto O. Garcia (president/medical director, 2005–2011).

Adventist Hospital Palawan: Dr. Melvyn F. Orbe (president/medical director, June 2012–January 2016); Mr. Rufo G. Gasapo (president, February 2016–December 2016); Mr. Elias Y. Apacible, Jr. (president, January 2017-)³.

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