



Another outstanding event by the People Empowerment for Arthritis and (PEARL) last Sunday, March 5, 2017 at St. Luke's Medical Center, E. Rodriguez, Quezon City was heralded by the key motivator and mentor, Dr. Sandra Navarra. PEARL was set up by RETFI through the dedicated partnership of the University of Santo Tomas (UST) and St. Luke's Medical Center (SLMC) Sections of Rheumatology. RETFI is a non-stock and non-profit organization with a primary aim to provide support systems for patients and their caregivers as they cope with various rheumatic diseases, enhance patients' productivity despite their otherwise debilitating conditions.

It is not uncommon for an event such as this to be fully baked considering that hard work and rigorous preparations have been made in preparation for this affair. This was again another experience to remember both for the patients, caregivers and staff alike. Weeks before the event everyone was encouraged to pre-register online. A total of 153 attendees including those who registered on-site were present. By breakdown of attendees there were 86 lupus, 43 rheumatoid arthritis, 10 psoriatic arthritis, and 8 osteoarthritis, 2 ankylosing spondylitis, 2 mixed connective tissue diseases and 2 Henoch Schonlein purpura. Medical students, senior medical interns and residents also participated and mentored the group activities.

The program started off with an energetic Zumba work-out with patients with all kinds of arthritis motivating the group and stirring the morning atmosphere.

The Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) has long been in partnership with RETFI in helping financially challenged patients in sustaining their medical needs. In order for the patients to understand more about the former institution and its function in rendering patients' needs, a lecture was conducted by Dr. Lorieilyn Salvador. Patients were able to recognise and understand where all lotto tickets they buy go equally to the needs of the Filipino people, may it be medical or otherwise. They were taught to be responsible and resourceful not to be dependent solely on PCSO but have other resources for their medical needs because the money is being distributed equally to every concerned Filipino citizen.

Dr. Ramon Miguel Molina oriented and encouraged the audience and the rest of the listeners on the Department of Health's (DOH) service to patients' medical needs. The importance of creating our own programs that foster recognition by the health government in regards to the rights of rheumatic patients thus, *All for Health and Health for All* by the Philippine Health Agenda 2016-2022 for a Healthy Philippines 2022. An effort to be recognized and be considered as counted subsidiaries is really an important move for the patients with rheumatic diseases.

An empowered patient can revolutionize health care. This was the lecture by Dr.



empowered individuals. No one knows best what an individual patient really needs but himself. Patients were reawakened of their power to take control of their health and its importance in the success of their medical problems. During this lecture, their partners in health – their doctors and the rest of the medical team took the opportunity to thank the patients for being: **patients as the best teachers** in the field.

Accompanying raffles in between lectures sustained the audience's energy all throughout the event. And of course, in order to get back on the generosity of RETFI, a rummage sale with items in exchange for the patient's donation on whatever amount filled up the voluntary





The patient as the center stage

A recap on the previous activities this year promoting patient empowerment was shared: “I have lupus, I am beautiful”, held last January, an activity that inspired lupus patients to feel beautiful inside and out and the 23rd PRA annual Convention held at Conrad hotel last February where lectures for patients promoting general health, information on rights of PWD patients and patient-physician encounters on Patient Partner workshops, all promoted self-empowerment for those involved.

I take ownership of my disease and educate others. So that by helping others, I help myself. They understand me better...then I was not alone anymore.

- an Empowered Patient

This event was made possible through Rheumatology Educational Trust Foundation Inc. (RETFI), a non-stock and non-profit organization which invests primarily on physician and patient education through various programs and activities, in partnership with private and government institutions and individuals. RETFI is highly committed to providing the highest standard of care for rheumatic disease patients through the pursuit of excellence in EDUCATION and RESEARCH.