



"CHRISTMAS RHEUM FOR KIDS AND TEENS"

Sunday, 8 December 2019

14th Floor Auditorium, CHBC, St. Luke's Medical Center, Quezon City

By: Jasper A. Borromeo, M.D.



While Christmas is a season for everyone to enjoy, it should also be a season worth dedicating to the children. Too often, it has been said that Christmas is for children, and there really is some truth to this. Simplicity, innocence, humility, docility and total faith are their traits and attitudes. And these are the traits that we adults should embrace more this Christmas season.

Each year, many of our kids miss out on the spirit of Christmas due to financial hardships, family issues, and peer isolation.

Thus the tradition of holding an annual Christmas children's party. For this year, Dr. Christine Bernal, head of Pediatric Rheumatology in the University of Santo Tomas (UST), joined by Dr. Sandra Navarra, head of UST Rheumatology hosted Christmas Rheum for kids and teens last Sunday, December 8, 2019. Supported by Lupus Inspired Advocacy (LUISA) and People Empowerment for Arthritis and Lupus (PEARL), this was held at St. Luke's Medical Center Quezon City Cathedral Heights Building which provided a welcoming venue full of Christmas cheer where children with lupus and arthritis, together with their families, celebrated a day of happiness with those who care. A total of 64 children attended, each accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Dr. Bernal joins a jolly crew of Rheumatology fellows from the University of Santo Tomas Hospital (USTH) and St. Luke's Medical Center (SLMC), and the Rheumatology section staff, in providing games, activities, food and drinks, and of course - presents!

The program started with an opening children's prayer. Welcoming remarks given by Dr. Bernal followed, emphasizing on how Christmas is truly a time for thanksgiving and for celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. And then, setting an energetic mood for the morning's activities, everybody were on their feet to Zumba with a dash of Christmas theme.



Dr. Christine Bernal giving her welcoming remarks.



Kids joining in on the Christmas Zumba led by the Rheuma Fellows.

It wouldn't be a party without games. Games are a great way of involving everyone. There were games for the little kids, for the teenagers, as well as for the parents and guardians. The games prepared included old favourites like 'Bring Me' and 'Message Relay',

and some fun variations like 'Elsa Went to Town' (a Christmas twist to the classic game 'Maria Went to Town'). The games were perfect for expending energy, letting off steam, and just having fun! And it was refreshing to witness how modern kids, despite living in times of consoles and iPads, still embrace and enjoy traditional party games.



Kids and their parents participate in the party games (Calamnsi relay; Limbo Rock; Elsa went to town).

The party served a perfect avenue to showcase the talents of some of our kids. Seventeen year old lupus patient Zenaida Camano sang an inspirational rendition of the song 'Maghintay Ka Lamang'. Cristel Espiritu, also with lupus, gave a solo dance performance like no other. While little lupus warriors Joannah Grande, Phoebe Marquez, and Jezreel Mercado took the dance floor with a hip-hop number.



Little Lupus warriors: Joannah Grande and Phoebe Marquez hit the stage with a dance number.

Children's holiday parties don't have to be full of refined sugar-filled treats. Brunch was served to the kids in the form of spaghetti, fried chicken and peach mango pie. For the adult guardians, a plate of pancit, lumpia shanghai, and puto was served.



Members and staff of the Rheumatology section help served brunch to the kids and guardians.

Childhood holiday memories can last a lifetime, which is why this year we wanted to make the yuletide season magical and meaningful for the kids. What better way then by treating them with a Magic Show packed with all sorts of magic tricks. Also a delight to see was the Bubble show that followed.



Young lupus patient Joannah Grande encased in a giant bubble.

Before the party ended, certificates of appreciation were rewarded to all the people, families, groups and organizations, who sponsored and supported the event. For their generosity, we give the sponsors a heartfelt Thank You! Their support for the success of the activity was priceless.



Awarding of certificates of appreciation to the generous sponsors.

During Christmas, the love for song translates to the tradition of caroling. In

remembrance of the true essence of Christmas, the program formally closed with everyone back on their feet, this time to sing as one family 'Star Ng Pasko'. We chose this song in particular to remind the children and their families that no matter how broken they get from all the hardships that come along with their illness, there is light amidst this darkness and that light is Christ.



Children and their parents/guardians gathered in front and held hands while singing 'Star Ng Pasko' together.

No one goes home empty-handed. After officially closing the program, the kids lined up to receive their Christmas loot bags. Then, everyone grouped together to have one final 'photo-op' with Dr. Bernal, Dr. Navarra, Rheumatology fellows and staff. Indeed, it was a successful Christmas party. Every kid went home with not just presents at hand, but also with a Christmas glow on their faces and happiness in their hearts.



Prizes for the raffle draw winners, and Christmas loot bags for everyone.



Group picture of Dr.Bernal with patients.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

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- Dr. Julie Li-Yu
- Dr. Christine Bernal
- Dr. Sandra Navarra

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