



**Philippine Rheumatology Association (PRA) Holds 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting**  
**EDSA Shangri-La Hotel, Mandaluyong, Metro Manila, Philippines**  
**February 20-22, 2020**

*By: Gerald B. Natanauan, MD*

**P**RA held the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual meeting at EDSA Shangri-La Hotel Mandaluyong last February 20-22, 2020 under the program title **REVEAL: Rheumatology Evidence Excellence And Leadership**. The annual meeting aimed to promote and strengthen Rheumatology as a subspecialty. It further aimed to discuss updates on the diagnosis and management of rheumatologic diseases in order to improve disease recognition and optimize patient outcomes, introduce emerging disease entities (either idiopathic or secondary to another chronic medical condition) which may need rheumatology inputs, discuss non-clinical issues related to the practice of rheumatology in the Philippines - medical education/training, leadership with social dimensions and the impact of universal health care, develop conceptual framework on which to build the practice of rheumatology nursing through the local implementation of the Asia Pacific Initiative for Rheumatology Nurse Education (ASPIRE) program, review local policies related to disability and persons with disability in order to minimize misconceptions, share conception stories of support groups to encourage the greater patient participation in health care.

The first day of the annual meeting (*pre-convention*) kicked-off with two-tracks: (1) the *ASPIRE* for Filipino Nurses Workshop intended to introduce concepts relevant to the practice of rheumatology nursing; and, (2) the PRA Review Course aimed at updating the management of common rheumatic conditions of practicing general practitioners, occupational health physicians, family medicine practitioners, internists and trainees. This meeting aimed at providing updated content (evidence and excellence in clinical practice) to physicians, nurses and patients on the management of rheumatologic diseases and providing perspective on non-clinical issues (leadership in education and government engagement, and physician participation in universal health care) related to the practice of rheumatology in the country.

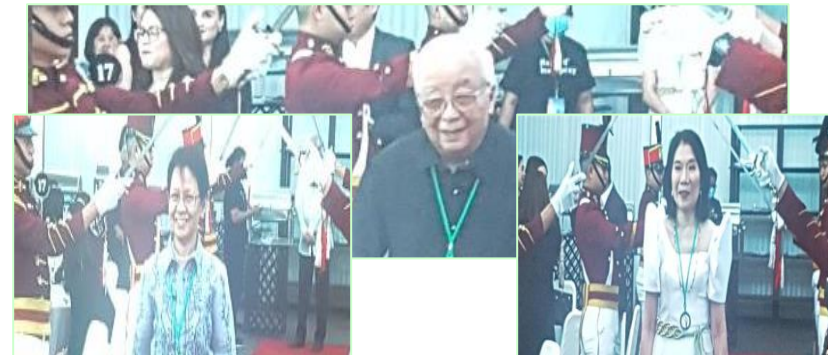


Drs. Linda Charmaine D. Roberto and Anna Regina R. Banatin moderated the PRA review course. Several overview lectures were given covering the basic topics in rheumatology such as approach to joint pains, backpains and soft tissue rheumatism; gout, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus and spondyloarthropathies.

The opening ceremony proper started in the afternoon with the master(s) of ceremonies, Drs. Auxencio Lorenz A. Lucero and Melissa Aquino Villamin. Dr. Julie Li-Yu, the PRA president delivered the welcoming remarks.

An inspirational lecture came-in next entitled ***Rheumatology and Beyond*** by Prof. Sandra V. Navarra. Her lectures had inspired many rheumatologists since then in their clinical and research fields. In her presentation she talked about the role of a clinician as a doctor, a researcher and as a teacher. Doctors including rheumatologists per se work tirelessly in the community for the patients, students and even fellow doctors for the delivery of the best education, information and health services. Research partnership and collaboration is very important as it creates more opportunities for medical development. Clinician as a teacher is another model to live with that's why there is no better way to teach medicine, compassion and effective communication skills than by the bedside and by example. Thus, she furthered that the patient itself is the best teacher - figuratively and literally. Learning the art of medicine is tough and

becoming a doctor is never easy. The best time to make mistakes is during training, in the presence of direct supervision and ready feedback. She emphasized on the role of the teacher not to coddle or pamper students but rather to teach resilience skills. So timely, she also talked about the challenges in teaching the millennial students entrapped in a sense of entitlement which is an adaptation to a regarded world of abundance. Acceptance and rightful adaptation is key in order to preserve the harmonious relationship between the old and new generation whilst attitude formation. Her last few talk was about the love for mother earth. Teachers likewise are game-changers urging students to be committed in protecting mother nature. A presentation of an edited video and a song version of "Under The Sea" became the finale.



Prof. Sandra Navarra, Prof. Tito Torralba, Dr. Julie Li-Yu as they enter for the opening ceremonies.

Induction of new PRA clinical members, diplomates and fellows followed immediately as facilitated by Drs.

Rosario P. Baes, Christine Bernal and Sidney Erwin T. Manahan.



The induction ceremony with the newly passed diplomates before the audience.

### DAY 1: 21 February 2020

The opening of the exhibits was headed by Drs. Julie Li-Yu (PRA President) and Emmanuel Perez (Over-all Chair, Organizing Committee PRA 2020). It showcased the various research poster presentations and clinical images from the different training institutions in the country.

Afterwhich, the morning started very strong with the guest speaker being the ombudsman herself, Justice Conchita Carpio-Morales (a Ramon Magsaysay Awardee). She

delivered her excellent speech under the theme, Leading with Integrity Despite Adversity. Her speech focused on living a life of justice, truth and integrity in the profession of medicine, law and philosophy. This over-all was Dr. Lourdes Manahan Memorial Lecture.



Justice Conchita Carpio-Morales delivering her speech at the Lourdes Manahan Memorial Lecture.

Dr. Albert Domingo had a plenary lecture on universal health care. He addressed on the readiness issues regarding the implementation of the universal health care in our own local setting.

Dr. Angeline Therese Magbitang-Santiago lectured on the most recent lupus criteria (2019). She mentioned that the 2019 EULAR/ACR SLE criteria reflects our current understanding of SLE as a multi-systemic, multi-organ and immunologically-driven disease. The new criteria have high sensitivity similar to SLICC, with improved specificity. It has the potential to identify SLE patients earlier in the course of disease. Its use of ANA as an entry criterion and a clustered & weighted criteria provide

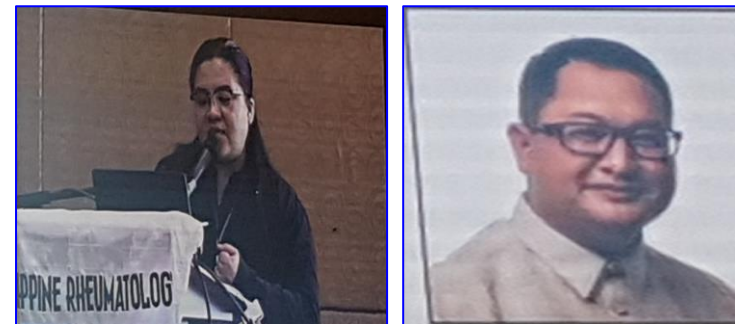
a paradigm shift in SLE research: evolution, prognosis. The new set of criteria remains a classification criteria, and diagnosis if SLE still falls within the realm of clinical decision-making.

This was followed by the lecture of Dr. Charito Cruz-Bermudez on anti-phospholipid syndrome (APS) management. Incorporated in her lecture was the European league against rheumatism guidelines on APS management. She mentioned that low-dose aspirin (LDA) is recommended for asymptomatic aPL carriers, patients with systemic lupus erythematosus without prior thrombotic or obstetric APS, and non-pregnant women with a history of obstetric APS only, all with high-risk aPL profiles. Patients with APS and first unprovoked venous thrombosis should receive long-term treatment with vitamin K antagonists (VKA) with a target international normalised ratio (INR) of 2-3. In patients with APS with first arterial thrombosis, treatment with VKA with INR 2-3 or INR 3-4 is recommended, considering the individual's bleeding/thrombosis risk. Rivaroxaban should not be used in patients with APS with triple aPL positivity. For patients with recurrent arterial or venous thrombosis despite adequate treatment, addition of LDA, increase of INR target to 3-4 or switch to low molecular weight heparin may be considered. Women with prior obstetric APS, combination treatment with LDA and prophylactic dosage heparin during pregnancy is recommended. In patients with recurrent pregnancy complications, increase of heparin to therapeutic dose, addition of

hydroxychloroquine or addition of low-dose prednisolone in the first trimester may be considered.

The lecture on emerging therapies for scleroderma-interstitial lung disease was tackled by Dr. Aileen Agbanlog-Dimatulac. She stated that the goal of treatment is still stabilization of the disease. ILD in the setting of systemic sclerosis can be very challenging and particularly morbid, and there is a high risk for mortality in these patients. Treatment of ILD associated with systemic sclerosis requires a multidisciplinary approach.

Another interesting lecture on the basics of rheumatic manifestations of HIV/AIDS and immunosuppression in patients living with HIV/AIDS were provided by Infectious disease experts, Drs. Edsel Maurice T. Salvana and Kate Tolentino Leyritana.



Dr. Leyritana and Salvana, ID specialists on their lectures on HIV and rheumatologic manifestations.

Dr. Salvana thus emphasized that HIV can present with rheumatic features. Diffuse infiltrative lymphocytosis



syndrome (DILS), painful articular syndrome and HIV arthropathy are specifically linked with an HIV diagnosis. Some rheumatic features such as myopathy and vasculitis are generally related to the immune dysfunction in HIV. Anti-retrovirals (ARVs) improve survival and disease activity in general. Caution in using immunosuppressives, usually safe when CD4 counts are higher. Furthermore, Dr. Leyritana summarized that the treatment for rheumatic diseases is generally similar in HIV-positive and HIV-negative individuals. Caveats include advanced immunosuppression, co-occurrence of other conditions, immune reconstitution, and drug interactions.

On the other hand, a patient support group meeting with representatives from Psoriasis Philippines, Lupus Foundation, Scleroderma Sister and Ankylosing Society of the Philippines was simultaneously held at Boracay room moderated by Drs. Evan Glenn S. Vista and Tommy E. Bangayan.

## DAY 2: 22 February 2020

The last day of the annual meeting started with a lecture on interstitial pneumonia with autoimmune features (IPAF) by Dr. Celeste Mae L. Campomanes. She discussed that the prognosis of IPAF is intermediate between that of idiopathic-pulmonary fibrosis (IPF) and CTD-associated ILD but substantially variable according to predominant histologic and radiologic patterns. Presence of IPAF criteria is associated with a generally

better outcome compared to IPF. Usual interstitial pneumonia (UIP) pattern at imaging and histopathology may be associated with more severe outcomes. Prognosis studies are limited by the retrospective design.



Dr. Campomanes in her IPAF lecture.

Dr. Melchor Alan L. Siriban discussed on macrophage activating syndrome (MAS). In his lecture, he tackled on potentially useful markers of macrophage activation. Of which, the detection of hemophagocytosis using serum laboratory tests include: soluble CD25 (aka soluble IL-2 receptor alpha), soluble CD163- a high affinity scavenger receptor for hemoglobin-haptoglobin complexes [both of which may be elevated; more sensitive in detection of MAS. He also highlighted the histopathological features by bone marrow aspiration (BMA) including the presence of macrophage hemophagocytosis in the bone marrow and increased CD163 staining of the bone marrow.



Dr. Siriban and Zamora as they speak before the plenary.

Dr. Leonid Zamora was the speaker of the plenary session entitled 'Preventive Rheumatology: Is It Possible'. His discussion included the caveats of preventive rheumatology such as identifying at-risk and high risk individuals in which specific mechanisms at the earliest phase of the disease is largely unknown and on identifying and monitoring important outcomes where the potential benefits may extend beyond the disease itself.

Dr. Gideon Caballes, chair of the PRA research committee with co-chair Evan Glenn S. Vista headed the PRA research presentations.

'Muscle weakness and creatine kinase elevation in 2 siblings: Beyond inflammatory myopathy' by Dr. Martin Carl C. Carbonel, 'Anti-MDA5 as marker for progressive interstitial lung disease in dermatomyositis: a case report' by Dr. Daniel C. Castillo were among the winners of oral case report. Other winners for both case report and original research came from Makati Medical Center

and Philippine General Hospital. Dr. Elbert DG. Mendez also won in the image contest as third place.



Drs. Martin Carbonel (upper left), Daniel Castillo (upper right) and Elbert Mendez (lower picture, 3<sup>rd</sup> from left) as they present and receive certificate for the oral presentation and image contest.

Last two lectures were given by Dr. Christine B. Bernal and Dr. Ester Penserga before the closing ceremony proper. They tackled on the best practices in transitioning

pediatric rheumatology patients to adult care and the best practices in osteoarthritis management.



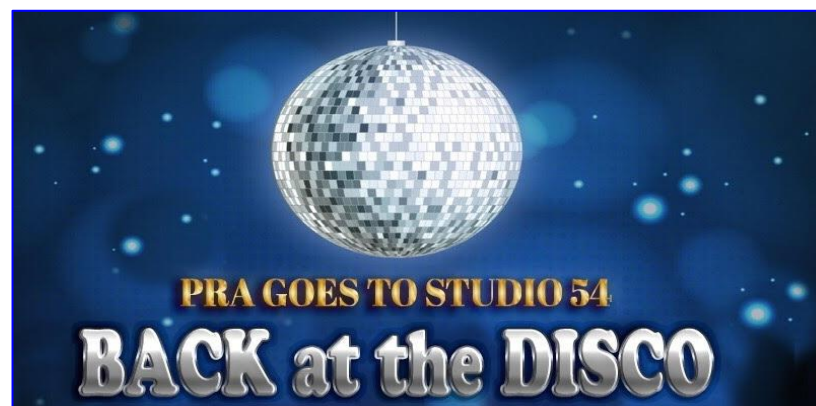
Dr. Bernal as she explains on the need for systematic transition from pediatric to adult care.

Dr. Christine Bernal emphasized on the need for a 'systematic' transition. And this is because patients with SLE have shown notable anxiety & depression in the post-transition period. She quoted "...patients felt de-personalized, abandoned, ill-prepared & not in control of their transition process" (*Kelly A et al ACR 2017*). While Dr. Penserga in her lecture re-visited clinical practice guidelines and classification criteria in osteoarthritis and real time/individual experiences.

The closing ceremonies of the annual meeting was held with acknowledgements by Dr. Emmanuel C. Perez. It was immediately followed by PRA annual business meeting.

\*\*\*

## PRA Fellowship Night



The last day became a blast as the fellowship night went back at the disco under the theme PRA goes to studio 54. Outstanding performances were made colorful by Whiplash dancers, Drag-ons, Judith Banal and the Powerplay band with the special participation of the fellows and consultants. It was choreographed and directed by Mr. Andrew Ferraris.







The PRA family as they pose all together with the out-going president, Dr. Julie T. Li-Yu.

\*\*\*

Our Family  
Is a circle of strength;  
Founded on Faith, Joined in Love  
Kept by God, Together  
*forever*