

**PRESIDENT FERDINAND ROMUALDEZ MARCOS JR.'s
SPEECH AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE HEALTHWAY
CANCER CARE HOSPITAL**

Taguig City
November 24, 2023

[00:00:02]

Thank you very much. Please take your seats. Thank you very much to our Health Secretary Ted Herbosa for his introduction.

To the members of the Diplomatic Corps; the visiting ministers we have here with us from the United Arab Emirates; Interior and Local Government Secretary Benhur Abalos; the host city to this rather impressive facility, Taguig City Mayor Ma. Laarni Lopez-Cayetano; other elected officials that are here as well; of course, the proponent for all of these that we are opening, inaugurating and bringing to the service of the people, Ayala Corporation Health Chairman Fernando Zobel de Ayala; Ayala Corporation Health President and CEO Paolo Borromeo, who— malapit na magkakaroon na siya ng opisina sa palasyo. [laughter]

I see him more often than some of our Cabinet Secretaries. [laughter] Wala talaga, iyon ang ano niya, that's his advocacies. And you can see that, you know, when he's bringing something to the table, he means it. It's not just business. It's important to him. And that is why we have encouraged him and tried to support everything that he have been doing from the government side because it is clearly all very important.

So, the other distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

I am extremely pleased to join you today as we open this first hospital in the Philippines dedicated to cancer care --- this Healthway Cancer Care Hospital. I have to congratulate the Ayala Healthcare Holdings, Inc. and its chairperson, Fernando Zóbel De Ayala, for this noble achievement.

Let me also recognize the City Government of Taguig, the Department of Health, the FDA for their efforts in making, accelerating the process to establish this

facility. The opening of the HCCH will go a long way in improving access to quality cancer care for many Filipinos.

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Moreover, this endeavor highlights our strong partnership with the private sector in strengthening our healthcare system, which is aligned with the Philippine Health Facility Development Plan and the Integrated Cancer Program. All of these is geared towards our goal of universal healthcare.

With the help of the HCCH, we can revolutionize the cancer care service industry in the Philippines through modern, state-of-the-art equipment, coupled with leading medical professionals and oncologists. It will certainly positively reflect on the country's growing potential as a leading healthcare destination in Asia.

Cancer still remains as one of the most dreaded illnesses in the country. Secretary Ted Herbosa had just informed me that cancer is now number three in terms of mortality for our general populace.

However, with facilities such as this, we will allow the main weapon that we have in combating cancer --- early detection. Early detection allows for patients the best chance in fighting this disease. We therefore encourage all Filipinos to get regular check-ups now that we have the facilities by going to community health centers.

We have also made available primary care services where patients may consult for early detection of cancer. Our PhilHealth Konsulta primary care team is also available to provide free diagnostic examinations and laboratory tests. For cancer treatment, we have designated 25 Specialty Centers in Cancer Care in select DOH hospitals nationwide.

So, I encourage the public to maximize these programs, services and facilities for cancer care, prevention and treatment, as the government strives to bring healthcare closer to the people.

We recognize that there are great financial burdens to cancer treatments. So, to ease the hardship of cancer patients and provide equitable access to healthcare, we have also established the Cancer Assistance Fund, which will pay for the cost of cancer diagnostics and laboratories not covered by PhilHealth.

So, as we establish a more accessible, efficient and responsive healthcare system, I urge all public and private stakeholders to support the Philippine Health Facility Development Plan and invest in building more health facilities similar to the HCCH. Rest assured that the government remains committed to nurturing an environment that upholds the total well-being of our people; of course, with the continued support of our private partners and investors in healthcare.

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I believe that this is also, not only is this an important day in terms of healthcare and in terms of our capabilities and capacities to help cancer patients and to also those who need early detection, those who need testing, to give that facility to them. And it is important because we never had anything like this before. And it is a testament to the forward thinking of many of our healthcare professionals both in the public sector and in the private sector, certainly. And it shows that we put a priority on the healthcare of our people.

I cannot forget very early on in my political career when I was reminded. I was governor then and I was --- and my staff could not understand and said, “You’re using one-third of your provincial budget for healthcare.” That is, we’ve never seen that before. And I quoted to them, I said, “No matter how wealthy you are, no matter how successful you are, you cannot enjoy that wealth or that success if you do not have your health.” And that is why it is a priority. It may not be politically saleable.

Ang lagi kong sinasabi— sinasabi ko pagka eleksyon, sinasabi tingan mo iyong ginawa kong eskwelahan. Tignan mo iyong ginawa kong kalsada. But what do you say about healthcare? All our people are healthy. That’s why people tend to be deprioritized because of the political concerns.

But nonetheless, I cannot remove that from my mind that I was told, I was advised, healthcare is important simply because nothing else matters if you are ill. Nothing else matters if you are sick. Nothing else matters if you are dying.

And that is why I am so pleased. I am so happy to be here today to see this as we progress in our healthcare system for the Philippines. We have learned many difficult, tragic lessons from Covid and I’m glad to see that we are applying those lessons learned now to the healthcare of our people.

This is also important because it is a very clear example of how the whole-of-society, whole-of-nation principle can bring success. We, in government, provide the atmosphere, the environment to allow, to encourage, even, to promote this kind of projects. And we have come together and we have come to this point, to this day where we are able to say we now have a state-of-the-art cancer care center, which we never had before and I hope that this will serve as an example to many others who will say that this can be done. And to encourage them to do more.

So, let us work hand in hand as we take the challenges in public health and deliver quality medical services to our people all over the country. With all of us striving together in this pursuit, I am confident that we will succeed to bring forth a stronger and healthier Philippines in the future.

Thank you and I wish the men and women of the Healthway Cancer Care Hospital all the best and all the success.

Mabuhay kayong lahat! Mabuhay ang Bagong Pilipinas! Magandang umaga po sa inyong lahat [applause].

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