

A 'gray tsunami' is brewing and the Philippines has to prepare for it

By Patricia B. Mirasol Reporter

A GRAY tsunami is brewing in the Philippines, as its population ages. Staff resignations, a lack of funding, and the pandemic, however, are slowing gerontology initiatives to prepare for this demographic shift.

"If you ask me, we are not yet ready for this tsunami," said Lydia T. Manahan, a registered nurse, professorial lecturer at the University of the Philippines (UP) Manila's College of Nursing, and founder of the Gerontology Nurses Association of the Philippines (GNAP).

The Philippines is expected to have an ageing population by 2032 — with the proportion of individuals aged 65 and above projected to exceed 7%, according to the United Nations (UN) Department of Economic and Social Affairs. In 2020, it was at 5.5%, according to data from the World Bank.

Per another UN report, 1 in 6 people in the world will be over the age of 65 by 2050.

RESPECT AND DIGNITY

Gerontology is a multidisciplinary approach that includes doctors, nurses, social workers, and interest groups that look into the different facets of aging — whether physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual. The term is sometimes interchanged with geriatrics, which refers to medical care for individuals over 65 years.

Despite being similar in age, adults in this age bracket are "very heterogeneous," said Ms. Manahan in a Feb. 5 Facebook discussion on gerontology nursing.

"A nurse has to be creative to come up with a care program that fits not only a person's age, but also his/her functional capacity," she added. "The number one thing I tell my students and co-nurses is that there should be respect and dignity afforded to older adults. They are persons and they are our patients."

The Department of Health (DoH) is aware of the need to prepare our nurses on the how-to's of elderly care, she added. The department, together with GNAP, started offering a three-month Gerontology Nursing Training Program in July 2016. For three successive years, staff from various DoH hospitals were trained in core competencies related to the health maintenance and well-being of older adults.

"We were cooking up plans on how to further the program, but then COVID-19 [coronavirus disease 2019] came in," Ms. Manahan said.

TRAINING GAP

Personnel have resigned in both private and public hospitals because of COVID-19, said Dr. Eva Aranas-Angel, a Davao City-based geriatric specialist.

"If you extrapolate this with the entire archipelago, we do have understaffing," she said. "Even contractual [staff] and those in the *plantilla* resign."

Ms. Manahan acknowledged that funding is an issue for the training gap.

"It all goes back to who will fund it. Even hospitals can't afford to send their personnel to training programs," she said. At a recent gerontology training session sponsored by GNAP, the UP College of Nursing, and the World Health Organization, she added, some of the trainees had to excuse themselves because they were being called to vaccinate patients.

Two silver linings exist, Ms. Manahan pointed out. One is the Masters of Arts in Nursing degree being offered at the UP Open University with a specialization in gerontology. The other is the National Commission of Senior Citizens. Signed into law by President Rodrigo R. Duterte on July 25, 2019, the commission is intended to function as the sole body attending to senior citizens' needs.

"The pandemic is not going to stop people from getting older," said Dr. Angel. "The general consensus is that older adults deserve TLC [tender loving care] plus add-ons."



Free online survey helps assess mental health

By Brontë H. Lacsamana Reporter

BREAK YOUR STIGMA, an online campaign by cosmetics brand BYS Philippines, launched in January a free mental health survey in collaboration with psychological service Vanguard Assessments & Behavioral Dynamics, Inc. (VABDI).

According to the website, the survey is an "evidence-based tool that screens and helps give a reflection of one's current mental state." Those who take the assessment will receive a brief psychological report, which can then be interpreted by a mental health professional — for a separate fee — if the person chooses to seek help.

"There are individuals that need validation from an assessment tool that confirms their own suspicions, while others are challenged by what they see, so it leads to a moment of questioning," said Miguel O. Valdez, VABDI chief executive officer, via e-mail.

"Even those who are not from the field of psychology express their interest and appreciation once they get to read the reports and be provided with short descriptions of what the data means and how it affects everyday living," he added.

The hope of Break Your Stigma is not for the survey to be a prerequisite for seeking help, but at least a starting point to acknowledge the issues one may have.

VABDI's mental health assessment, which takes around 30 minutes to complete, starts off with a consent page. There, the examinee will agree to giving data like name, age, birth date, sex, educational attainment, and the results for assessment and research purposes.

"Aside from following the Data Privacy Act, individuals handling data are licensed and fully committed to ensure that the reports of those who undergo assessment are kept confidential and only those authorized have access," said Mr. Valdez of VABDI.

The test itself consists of usual statements one can find in a psychological test, such as "I prefer to do things in a certain way" or "I like to draw attention to myself," to which one selects from a range of "Very false, somewhat false, somewhat true, and very true."

These cover behaviors, thoughts, and physical symptoms concerned with various mental health concerns. Once completed, it takes a week for a VABDI mental health professional to evaluate and write a psychological report to be sent via e-mail.

The report lays out in a checklist format the individual levels of concern for 25 different factors commonly measured when undergoing mental health screening — these include anxiousness, depressivity, impulsivity, and intimacy avoidance, among others.

Those who answer the survey can glean some insights on what requires most concern. However, the free test only provides basic explanations for each of the 25 factors, and a more comprehensive assessment by VABDI costs P4,000.

"Appreciation of the assessment will deepen once the individual proceeds to counseling inspired or guided by the desire to learn more about themselves and improve their quality of life," said Mr. Valdez of VABDI.

The Break Your Stigma website offers a directory of over 100 mental health professionals and organizations for Filipinos to choose from. The professional fee is separate from the fee for the comprehensive assessment.

COVID disrupts health services in over 90% of countries — WHO

GENEVA — Disruptions in basic health services such as vaccination programs and treatment of diseases like AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) were reported in 92% of 129 countries, a World Health Organization (WHO) survey on the impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic showed on Monday.

The survey, conducted in November–December 2021, showed services were "severely impacted" with "little or no improvement" from the previous survey in early 2021, the WHO said in a statement sent to journalists.

"The results of this survey highlight the importance of urgent action to address major health system challenges, recover services and mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic," the WHO said.

Emergency care, which includes ambulance and ER services, actually worsened with 36% of countries reporting disruptions versus 29% in early 2021 and 21% in the first survey in 2020.

Elective operations such as hip and knee replacements were disrupted in 59% of the countries and gaps to rehabilitative and palliative care were reported in about half of them.

The survey's timing coincided with surging COVID-19 cases in many countries in late 2021 due to the highly transmissible Omicron variant, piling additional strain on hospitals.

The WHO statement attributed the scale of disruptions to "pre-existing health systems issues" as well as decreased demand for care, without elaborating. — Reuters

COVID-19 vaccination protects children from getting seriously ill

The Department of Health (DoH) and the National Task Force Against COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) said that the policy to vaccinate children in the 5 to 11 age group is the result of careful study by health experts and has been approved in many countries.

In a joint statement, they said that more than 8.1 million children have been vaccinated worldwide, with no reports of deaths and serious adverse events among those vaccinated.

Vaccinating children aged 5 to 11 years old prevents severe COVID-19, hospitalization, and serious and long-term complications.

Citing modeling data from the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control, the Philippine Pediatric Society (PPS) and the Pediatric Infectious Disease Society of the Philippines (PIDSP) stated in their joint statement that vaccinating children aged 5 to 11 years old could also reduce COVID-19 transmission in the whole population, lower the likelihood of school absences and closures, lessen interference with social activities, and ease stress on families affected by COVID-19 and its associated disruptions.

PIDSP president Dr. Mary Ann Bunyi, also a member of the National Immunization Technical Advisory Group (NITAG), urged parents to have their children in this age group vaccinated when the government's pediatric vaccination program, which started on Feb. 7. With parental consent, the DoH has received at least 100,000 pre-registrations for the vaccination rollout for the said age group.

"The vaccine is safe and effective. This is an opportunity for your family and children to be protected against COVID-19. Getting fully vaccinated will enable your children to go outside the house, attend face-to-face classes, and play with their friends," she said.

In December 2021, the Philippine Food and Drug Administration issued an emergency use authorization for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for children aged 5 to 11 years. The vaccine for this age group has a lower dosage than the vaccine for the 12 to 17 age category and adults. The government aims to vaccinate at least 13.5 million children aged 5 to 11 against COVID-19.

"Published data from randomized clinical trials for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine showed that a vaccination regimen consisting of two 10-µg doses of the vaccine administered 21 days apart among 5–11-year-olds had a favorable safety profile and antibody levels comparable to those in 16- to 25-year-olds. A vaccine efficacy of 90.7% has formed the basis of approval for use of the vaccine in the Philippines and in other countries," according to the PIDSP and PPS joint statement.

It added that safety data from United States surveillance showed that serious adverse events following Pfizer-BioNTech vaccination in children ages 5 to 11 years occurred in only 2% of recipients, with fever and vomiting as the most frequently reported. In the latest Philippine safety data for the 12-17 age group, dizziness, injection site pain, fever, increased blood pressure, and headache were the most commonly reported adverse reactions.

Protecting children from COVID-19 is crucial. The PPS and PIDSP noted that in the Philippines, around 3% of COVID-19 cases and 0.5% of deaths are among children aged 5 to 11 years old, which is similar to the worldwide trend. "Although COVID-19 cases in children remain less severe compared to older adults, children can still be hospitalized and even require admission to the intensive care unit (ICU)."

Moreover, the two societies said that between 0.5% and 3.1% of all children diagnosed with COVID-19 and between 0.9% and 7.6% of hospitalized pediatric COVID-19 patients may be at risk of developing multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MISC). MISC is a condition where different body parts can become inflamed, including the heart, lungs, kidneys, brain, skin, eyes, or gastrointestinal organs.

"[Children] may also be at risk of developing 'long COVID,'" the PPS and PIDSP stated. Also known as long-haul COVID or post-acute COVID-19, long COVID refers to a wide range of new, returning, or ongoing health problems people can experience four or more weeks after first being infected with the virus that causes COVID-19.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said that people with long COVID commonly report experiencing different combinations of the following symptoms: difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, fatigue, symptoms that get worse after physical or mental activities (post-exertional malaise), difficulty thinking or concentrating (sometimes referred to as "brain fog"), cough, chest or stomach pain, headache, fast-beating or pounding heart (heart palpitations), joint or muscle pain, pins-and-needles feeling, diarrhea, sleep problems, fever, dizziness on standing (lightheadedness), rash, mood changes, change in smell or taste, and changes in menstrual period cycles.

TEODORO B. PADILLA is the executive director of the Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Association of the Philippines (PHAP), which represents the biopharmaceutical medicines and vaccines industry in the country. Its members are at the forefront of research and development efforts for COVID-19 and other diseases that affect Filipinos.



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JOB VACANCY
Job Title: Bi-Lingual Business Administrators (2 x Positions)
Minimum Job Qualifications/Description:
• Minimum 2 – 5 years' demonstrable experience in Business Administration and/or Marketing Administration.
• Minimum a Bachelor degree in Business, Marketing or related field.
• In-depth knowledge of marketing techniques and database management and data analysis.
• A demonstrable knowledge of Digital Marketing/Social Media Marketing techniques with the capability to undertake initiatives in order to promote the company externally.
• Proficient in MS Office and marketing software and editing software.
• Knowledge of the various social media platforms in the marketplace as well as awareness of the latest trends and developments.
• The capability to manage, update and develop the official social media accounts of the company and in this way raise the corporate profile of the company.
• Fully Bi-lingual in both English and Chinese with excellent verbal and written communication and interpersonal skills in order to be able to clearly communicate with senior management, internal teams, clients and partners.
Company Name: Blue Star Entertainment Inc.
Address: Chino Roces Avenue, Magallanes, Makati City.
Contact: Mr. Joel Delima Jr.; Email: ktjelima@gmail.com

JOB VACANCY
Job Title: Bi-Lingual Business Administrator
Minimum Job Qualifications/Description:
• Minimum 3 – 5 years' demonstrable experience in Business Administration.
• Minimum a Graduate in Business Management or a related course.
• Appropriate knowledge of Accounting and Bookkeeping principles.
• Proficient in the MS Office suite of products, with particular extended in-depth knowledge of MS Excel and MS PowerPoint being a must.
• Extensive experience in the various office management systems and procedures with a good ability to adapt to changes and new procedures.
• The capability to manage administrative office duties and work in a team environment including the scheduling and assigning of administrative projects and ensuring that these are delivered in time.
• Fully Bi-lingual in both English and Chinese with excellent verbal and written communication and interpersonal skills in order to be able to clearly communicate with senior management, internal teams, clients and partners.
Company Name: Behold Trading International Inc.
Address: A & G Bldg. Vito Cruz St. Malate, Manila City
Contact: Ms. Maria Bayani
Email: mariabayani07@gmail.com

Republic of the Philippines COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS Manila EN BANC
IN RE: MANIFESTATION OF INTENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PARTY-LIST SYSTEM OF REPRESENTATION IN THE 09 MAY 2022 ELECTIONS SPP NO. 21-161 (PLM) ALSA BISAYA (ALSA BISAYA) as represented by its President EDGAR A. CATARONGAN, Petitioner.
ORDER
Acting on the Manifestation of Intent to Participate filed on 31 March 2021 ("Manifestation"), the Commission En Banc hereby directs ALSA BISAYA to publish at its own expense the said Manifestation together with the instant Order in two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.
Any interested party may file with the Office of the Clerk of the Commission a verified petition seeking to deny due course to the Manifestation within ten (10) days from the date of publication pursuant to Rule 3, Section 7, paragraph 1 of the Comelec Resolution No. 9366, as amended by Comelec Resolution No. 10690.
Submission of proof of publication shall be transmitted via e-mail to the Office of the Clerk of the Commission (clerkofthecommission@comelec.gov.ph). Immediately after filing through e-mail, the same documents shall be sent in four (4) hard copies to the Office of the Clerk of the Commission, 8th Floor, Palacio del Gobernador Bldg., General Luna St., Intramuros, Manila through the fastest means available, including registered mail or any courier service.
SO ORDERED.
Given this JAN 28 2022, Manila, Philippines.
1. Records, Office of the Clerk of the Commission Case Folder 2 Sec. 7 Petition to deny due course to a manifestation of intent to participate...
2. Filing of Petitions for Registration...
3. Filing of Disqualification Cases against Nominees or Party-List Groups or Organizations Participating under the Party-List System of Representation in Connection with the May 13, 2019 National and Local Elections...
4. Filing of Disqualification Cases against nominees of groups, organizations and coalition under the Party-List System of Representation and requiring publication of substitute-nominees in connection with the 09 May 2022 National and Local Elections.
2. FES ACRONYM: ALSA BISAYA
3. FES WAS REGISTERED: POLITICAL PARTY
4. FES PLACE OF ORGANIZATION:
5. FES FOUNDER ARE: EDGAR A. CATARONGAN, RONALD DELA CRUZ, JONAS AMBISA, JELYN C. TORRES, MA. PRISCILLA ARAYAN, CHERU ARAGAN, JESSIE DELA ROSA, JEFREY ALBERTA BLANCO
9. FES ORGANIZATIONAL CHARTER:
10. FES POLITICAL ADDRESS:
10.1. Period of Existence: National
10.2. Canceled to exist from a period of one (1) year from time of registration.
11. PARTICIPATION:
11.1. It failed to obtain at least ten per centum (10%) of the votes cast in the last (2) preceding elections for the constituency it has registered and apply for a party list...
I hereby certify that the facts stated herein are true and correct based on my personal knowledge.
EDGAR A. CATARONGAN, President (Printed Name and Signature)
EDGAR A. CATARONGAN, the PRESIDENT of the ALSA BISAYA, of legal age, and with sufficient mental capacity, duly authorized to verify the foregoing Manifestation.
I have read and understood the contents thereof and acknowledge that the same are true and correct based on my personal knowledge.
IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto affixed my signature and hand on this 28th day of JAN 2022, at Manila, Philippines.
NOTARY PUBLIC
My Commission Expires on
MCLC Compliance No.