

OPINION

Promoting the culture of corporate citizenship

In further promoting the culture of corporate social responsibility (CSR), the PHAPCares Foundation recognized its members during its first CSR Seal of Excellence Awards held on Dec. 6, in partnership with the Department of Health (DoH) and the Philippine Medical Association (PMA).

The CSR Awards have two categories, namely, the Seal of Excellence in Healthcare, and the CSR Seal of Excellence in Sustainability and Innovation.

For the Seal of Excellence in Healthcare, five companies were awarded for their major and consistent contributions to the programs and projects of the Foundation, specifically in the areas of sustainable healthcare, access to medicines, emergency response, and social development. Among the awardee companies were Bayer Philippines, Boehringer Ingelheim Philippines, PHILUSA Corp., Roche Philippines, and Takeda Healthcare Philippines.

There were also five finalists for the Seal of Excellence in Sustainability and Innovation Award who were recognized for exemplary initiatives that improve the lives and health of individual Filipinos and the communities.

Roche Philippines, adjudged the overall winner, was awarded for its Mission Leapfrog Program (MLP) which aims to accelerate the transformation in healthcare outcomes by aiming to achieve 2030 health systems today. The MLP focuses on the journey of breast and cervical cancer patients and by working closely with healthcare ecosystem partners. The program covers mobilization and education, early screening, innovative diagnostics and treatment, laying the groundwork for a fully funded referral system, and institutionalizing a cancer program supported by policy or law. From one pilot city in March 2022, Mission Leapfrog has expanded to four program sites in Tacloban, Tayabas, Valenzuela and PAGCOR.

Meanwhile, AstraZeneca Philippines was also recognized for addressing the burden of the most prevalent noncommunicable diseases such as lung cancer, type 2 diabetes, and asthma, as well as coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) through a collaborative and holistic approach. This involves improving access to comprehensive disease management and medicines through integrated healthcare solutions — from education, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. Among their programs are the Lung Ambition Alliance Program, Act Now for Diabetes, and One Healthy Lung Philippines. They have also brought together local government units and the private sector to work towards a sustainable immunization program.

Boehringer Ingelheim, for its part, was recognized for its Acute Networks Striving for Excellence in Stroke (ANGELS), a healthcare initiative that helps hospitals become stroke-ready,

enabling them to treat patients who have just suffered a stroke quickly and effectively. To date, the ANGELS Program has helped develop 26 acute stroke-ready hospitals nationwide and 10 public and private hospitals, including two public hospitals in Visayas and Mindanao. From seven consulted hospitals in 2017, ANGELS currently has 72 hospitals in consultation, and expects to expand further in the coming years.

After nearly three years of the pandemic, Merck Philippines was awarded for being the first company permitted and authorized to hold a fun-run in Bonifacio Global City (BGC) for a notable purpose. The event was aimed at promoting the health and wellbeing of the company's employees and to raise funds for the adoption of a science classroom in Taguig City. The activity accomplished health and wellness among employees, diversity and inclusiveness within their organization, and instilling a strong sense of purpose in the organization.

MEDICINE CABINET TEODORO B. PADILLA

Meanwhile, Takeda Healthcare Philippines was recognized for its Access to Innovative Medicines Initiative to improve access to care and treatment. The initiative utilized a holistic and multisectoral approach to address barriers across the patient journey and strengthen the healthcare system. It initiated the Spot Lymphoma, Stop Lymphoma campaign to generate awareness about the disease. Through its Patient Assistance Program, the company provided financial assistance to over 500 patients, helping them complete their treatment. They also provided free patient care training for 1,930 oncology nurses.

The CSR Awards are aligned with a bill encouraging CSR in the private sector filed this August at the House of Representatives, prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic and rising inflation, among other reasons.

House Bill 3627 or the "Corporate Social Responsibility Act" was introduced by Mindoro Representative Leody "Odie" F. Tarrilla to recognize the vital role of the private sector in contributing to the socioeconomic development of the country.

"The private corporations' initiatives through various programs, projects, and services which address the social issues of the community greatly contribute to the alleviation of poverty, and improvement of the lives of our fellow constituents," the bill states.

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.



Keep the holiday peace, avoid intrusive questions

QUESTIONS about added pounds and romantic prospects (or a lack thereof) are part of a toxic culture "rooted in our nature to be friendly and sociable" and should be avoided during holiday reunions, a psychologist said.

"The downside is we don't respect boundaries anymore," said Dr. Rea Celine Villa, a senior psychologist of Mind You Mental Health Systems, which provides mental health services.

The chorus of offensive comments and questions — "You gained weight!" "When are you going to marry?" "Why is your child even taking that university degree? Graduates of that degree don't earn much!" — can be attributed to a lack of skill in small talk, Dr. Villa said, citing the sociologist Bro. Clifford T. Sorita, who spoke about the Filipino fondness for uncomfortable personal questions as conversation starters with GMA News Online.

While Westerners build rapport by referencing the weather, Filipinos go straight for the jugular and ask about intimate details, said Dr. Villa in the vernacular.

"We try our best to build rapport with relatives, but it sometimes comes off as off," she added. "We need to refine this method."



Individuals at the receiving end of these intrusive questions should deflect, diffuse, or decide to decline, and "respectfully agree to disagree," suggested Dr. Villa at a Dec. 14 webinar.

"Don't be afraid to communicate," she said, adding that family reunions can be marked by joy and humor without the meddling and gossip. — **P. B. Mirasol**

Don't celebrate by binge drinking — PCP

TO AVOID liver disease and accidents as a result of holiday revelry, Filipinos should be wary of alcoholic tendencies and drink responsibly, a hepatologist said.

"It [binge drinking] can put you at risk of developing alcoholic hepatitis, and those with a background of diabetes or are overweight can experience more problems. It contributes to liver diseases and other pathologies," said Dr. Diana A. Payawal, president of the Philippine College of Physicians (PCP), at a Dec. 13 webinar on holiday health essentials.

Binge drinking or excessive alcohol use is defined by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as having four or more beer bottles or hard drinks for women and five or

more for men, within the span of two to three hours.

Studies have shown that binge drinking is a risk factor for advanced alcoholic liver disease.

In the Philippines, liver cancer is the fourth most common cancer, claiming a total of 9,953 lives in 2020 and affecting two times more men than women, according to data from the Philippine Statistics Authority and the Department of Health.

Dr. Payawal explained that although alcohol is considered an integral part of holiday celebrations in the country, Filipinos must exercise caution to protect both their own health and that of others.

"For example, crimes related to New Year celebrations occur because people

are drunk. Not only does it bring harm to ourselves but to other people, so we must be aware of the collateral damage related to excessive alcohol," she said.

At risk of the most harmful effects of binge drinking are those who don't have a high tolerance or aren't even alcoholics but go all out just for one night, according to the CDC.

Even red wine, which contains 12 to 14 grams of alcohol, and white wine, which contains less than 10 grams of alcohol, still have deleterious effects.

"Spirits aren't as strong as hard drinks, but they're still alcohol," reminded Dr. Payawal. "You have the liberty to drink water and pace yourself." — **Brontë H. Lacsamana**

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