MESSAGE FROM THE PAST PRESIDENT

DR. MA. CRISTINA MACROHON-VALDEZ

The past two years have been a journey of advocacy and service to our fellow Filipinos. This came to be when every single component that made up the Stroke Society of the Philippines hummed like a well-oiled machine that functioned towards a common goal.

Commitment to a cause could never be forced nor imposed on anyone, especially for people in our profession who have their respective practice and patients to look after. Yet, we saw how the Board, the officers, and the members remained steadfast in their dedication to our association.

Commitment is not an exact science nor a mathematical equation that is born out of a formula. Commitment stems from two things - clarity and buy in.

The clarity of our direction, to reduce the incidence of stroke or brain attack thereby reducing the morbidity and mortality of stroke and improve the quality of life of those who suffered and survived stroke here in the Philippines, is something that has been ingrained in each one in SSP. This has led us to devote time and effort to make sure we deliver on our promise.

This has also led to us to embrace the belief that the goal of stroke reduction and the bolder mission of stroke elimination are bigger than each one of us. Hence, we need to put our resources, abilities, brains, and effort into a collective basket that we can carry with us as we reach out to a broader base of Filipinos.

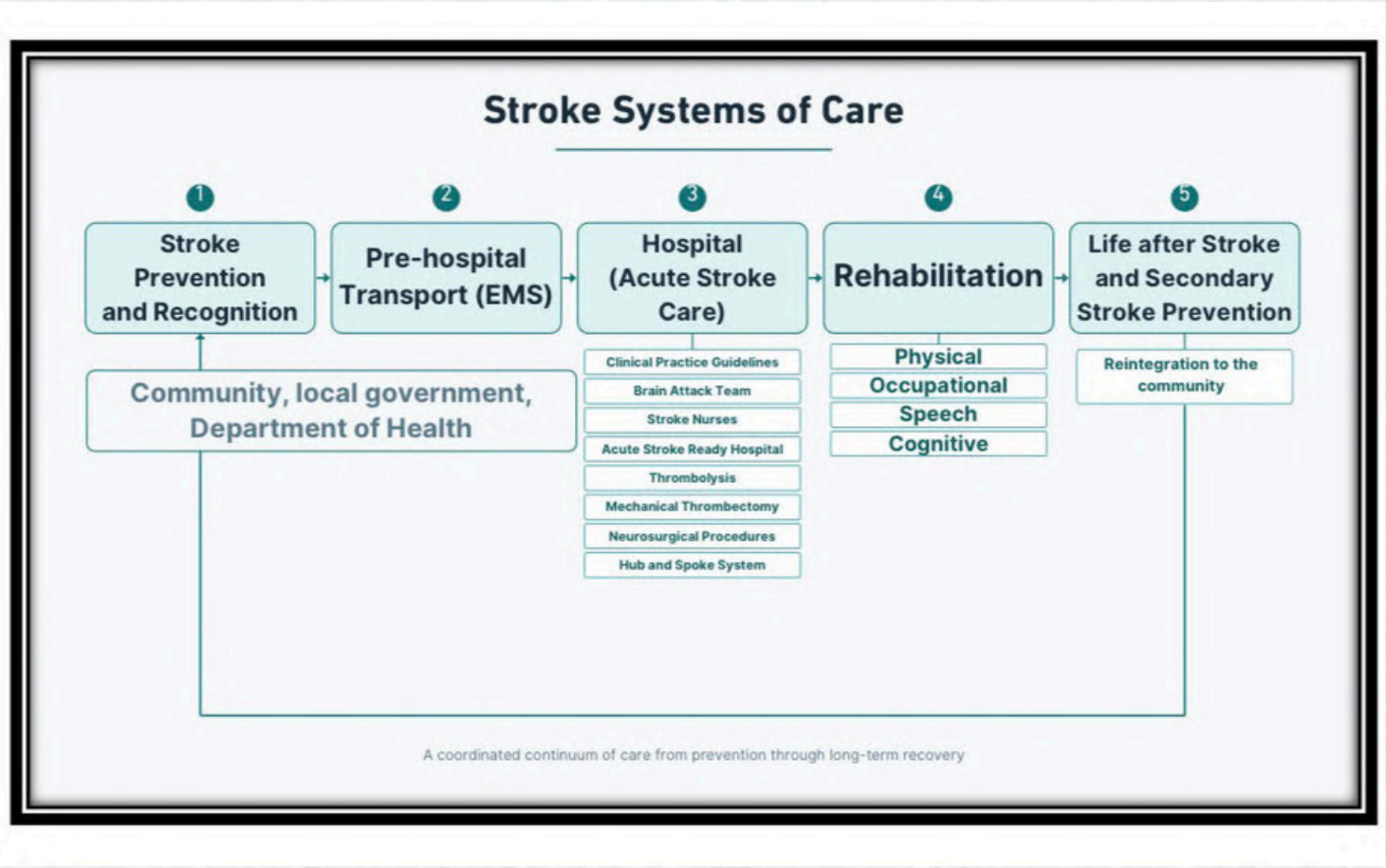


We have come together the past two years. We will continue to work together in the coming years, building networks, fostering partnerships, gaining recognition and support from other stakeholders, as we sustain the gains and build on what we have accomplished as a society.

THE COMMON, UNIFYING THREAD: THE SSP STROKE SYSTEMS OF CARE

September 2024 marked a pivotal moment in setting the direction and defining the quintessential identity of the Stroke Society of the Philippines.

The SSP Stroke Systems of Care was conceived as a framework that would allow us to align our organizational plans and national strategies and more importantly, turn these into actionable programs that would impact the patient journey in its entirety.



This framework proved to be more than just our compass. It was designed to enable us to do work that matters, to reduce the burden, incidence, mortality, and disability associated with stroke while improving outcomes across the Philippines.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE. IT ALSO REQUIRES BRIDGES.

The road to stroke awareness, prevention, and care has never been a paved nor easy path to traverse. It entails a whole ecosystem that functions effectively and efficiently towards a common objective.

What we have learned from this journey is that we need not take on this mission on our own. There are, in fact, others who share the same vision, and we all came to the realization that we needed each other to have a more lasting impact in the community.

We made the conscious effort to seek out other stakeholders, in the process, establishing networks that not only brought our plans to fruition, but also propelled us farther than we imagined we could reach.

We worked with the Department of Health and PhilHealth in enacting a National Stroke Policy which moved to increase the coverage for stroke, giving intended beneficiaries a bigger fighting chance to survive, recover, and recuperate.

SSP sought to extend stroke prevention and recognition beyond hospitals and into communities by getting involved in national health-promotion initiatives, the PinaSigla and Kalyesugan campaigns, media education, LGU and Local Health Board engagement. This became possible because of the partnerships we fostered with the Department of Health, local government units, provincial and NCR chapters, community health workers, and professional societies.

Recognizing the need to multiply our capability and reach, we involved ourselves in The Train-the-Trainers Program in Rizal in July 2025 to help empower local health leaders and frontline personnel to cascade knowledge on prevention, early recognition, appropriate response, and referral within their communities. This initiative carried over to this year with our community-based approach extending to the Taguig City Stroke Awareness, Prevention and Community Response Program for Barangay Health Workers and NCD Movers.

There are lessons to be learned here. One is the crucial role that bridges play in bringing people closer to their destination. The other is getting everyone in the village on board so we could make the journey of improving lives a communal effort.

IMPACT WHERE IT MATTERS

The ecosystem that we have build is one that thrives on connectivity. Our efforts are intentional and purposeful. These have to be. This goes beyond advocacy. When lives are at stake. this becomes a moral responsibility.

Recognition wbich leads to prevention is connected to EMS.
EMS is connected to Acute Stroke Ready Hospitals.
Hospitals are connected through Hub-and-Spoke networks.
Acute care is connected to rehabilitation.
Rehabilitation is connected to life after stroke.

But all of the above will be nothing more than mere slogans if the components that make the ecosystem come alive are not complemented with education, evidence, policy, financing, quality improvement, advocacy, and partnership.

In acute stroke care, SSP continued to advance Acute Stroke Ready Hospitals, Brain Attack Teams, thrombolysis, mechanical thrombectomy, stroke nursing, standardized clinical pathways, clinical practice guidelines, stroke-center certification, and Hub-and-Spoke networks. In fact, 10 active Hub-and-Spoke systems had been organized by 2026 to connect hospitals with different levels of stroke capability and facilitate referral and transfer across the stroke network.

In the Stroke Systems of Care which is built on the idea that the patient's jiourney extends beyond acute survival, SSP strengthened collaboration with the rehabilitation community, including the Philippine Academy of Rehabilitation Medicine. We worked with the speech-language pathology community and the Bayanihan/"Voluntherapy" Speech Therapy Program as we sought to bring communication recovery and rehabilitation closer to stroke survivors who need them.

Our stroke-center certification, done in collaboration with the World Stroke Organization, strengthened standardized neurological assessment through the Joint PNA–SSP NIHSS Workshop, expanded professional education through the BESTPH Online Academy, and developed initiatives such as the Stroke Nursing Masterclass to recognize the indispensable role of stroke nurses.

To emphasize stroke as an urgent and pressing national health system concern that required prioritized attention, we reviewed and bolstered policies. This way, our engagement with the APAC Stroke Policy Alliance, development of a country activation plan, participation in multisectoral health-policy forums, and alignment with the national stroke-policy framework broadened how stroke is regarded beyond just a clinical concern.

BUILDING SYSTEMS THAT WORK

March 6-7, 2025: The Stroke Society of the Philippines conducted its first BEST-PH on Caravan in Palawan.



Held at the Allied Care Experts Medical Center Palawan Convention Hall, the event which was overseen by local champion Dr. Suzie Ilagan-Gacita was attended by medical doctors and nurses from different hospitals in Palawan.

The BEST-PH on Caravan in Palawan featured refresher lectures on the acute recognition, evaluation, and management of Hyperacute Ischemic Stroke and Acute Intracerebral Hemorrhage (spontaneous ICH and aneurysmal subarachnoid hemorrhage. The event was also aimed at enhancing the teamwork of the multidisciplinary stroke care team to maintain the acute stroke-ready hospital.



April 25, 2025: The SSP's BEST-PH on Caravan in Sorsogon.

The activity staged at the Melad Hotel was led by Dr. Jasper Cubias who also served as a resource speaker. Other resource speakers were Dr. Rolan Lyndon Osial, Dr. Geraldine Siena Mariano, Dr. Pedro Danilo Lagamayo, Dr. Roanne Halum, Dr. Mark Timothy Cinco, Dr. Jose Alvin Mojica, and Mark Joseph Chang, RN.

75 doctors and registered nurses from Metro Health Specialists Hospital, Sorsogon Medical Mission Group Hospital & Services Cooperative, Chacon General Hospital, Gubat St. Anthony Cooperative General Hospital, Inc, and the Sorsogon Provincial Hospital attended the refresher course on various relevant stroke-related topics.

BUILDING SYSTEMS THAT WORK



May, 2025: Stroke Team Training and Skills Workshop in Tuguegarao.

St. Paul Hospital (SPH) – Tuguegarao, in collaboration with the ANGELS Initiative and the SSP Tuguegarao Chapter, successfully conducted the activity which included both virtual learning and role-play simulations for allied healthcare professionals.

A total of 134 participants from Tuguegarao, Tabuk, Camalaniugan and Ilagan joined the training, marking another important milestone in advancing stroke care in these areas.

May 29, 2025: A workshop on the topic "Optimizing Stroke Care Delivery through the Hub and Spoke Model" at the Newtown Plaza Hotel.

The SSP-Baguio Benguet Chapter-BGHMC and ANGELS Initiative gathered 40 Health Care Professionals from Baguio General Hospital, Atok District Hospital, Itogon District Hospital, Dennis Molintas Municipal Hospital, Kapagan District Hospital and Provincial Health Office for the 4-hour activity which tackled foundational concepts, implementation strategies, real world applications and action planning nuanced to the dynamics and needs of Baguio and surrounding regions. SSP Baguio-Benguet Chapter President and BGHMC Department of Neurosciences Chairman Dr. John Hiyadan opened the workshop. This was followed by lectures from project spearhead Dr. Cyrus Escabillas, Dr. Peter Allan Quitasol, Dr. April Grayle Taclobao, Dr. Laurence Batino, and Dr. Mark Timothy Cinco.





BUILDING SYSTEMS THAT WORK



July 2, 2025: Stroke Care Simulation Program at Don Emilio Del Valle Medical Center.

With a lecture centered on “Preventing Disability through Thrombolysis” and a hands-on simulation, the program assessed real-time gaps and aligned protocols toward faster, life-saving stroke care.

Dr. Christian Lim and the Stroke Team of Gov. Celestino Gallares Memorial Medical Center in partnership with SSP and ANGELS Initiative aimed to establish more stroke-ready centers throughout Bohol.

July 3, 2025: "Empowering Local Health Leaders in Stroke Care: A Train-the-Trainers Program" at the Multipurpose Hall, Ynares Center in Antipolo City.

The initiative by the SSP and local neurologists of Rizal Province, under the leadership of Dr. Ian and Cherry Lazaro, was a step forward in empowering Municipal Health Officers (MHOs) and City Health Officers (CHOs) to become stroke trainers. The training equipped trainers with the knowledge they were expected to cascade to Barangay Health Workers (BHWs), enhancing the community ability to recognize and care for stroke.



July 24-25, 2025: The SSP joined 200 stroke experts and policymakers from 15+ countries to strengthen global stroke systems of care during the World Stroke Organization - Global Stroke Alliance 2025 and ANGELS ASKAN Joint Meeting held in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Dr. Maria Socorro Sarfati, Past President of SSP, received the Spirit of Excellence Award, becoming the first Filipino to earn this international recognition. She was honored as the founder of the SSP Stroke Nurse Masterclass Program, in partnership with the ANGELS Initiative.



Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center, Governor Celestino Gallares Memorial Hospital, Jose Reyes Memorial Medical Center, Quirino Memorial Medical Center, and Philippine General Hospital were bestowed with recognition during the event.

BUILDING SYSTEMS THAT WORK

October, 2025: a Lecture-Workshop on Prehospital Stroke Management: Creating Links Between Acute Stroke Ready Hospitals and Emergency Medical Systems.



The SSP – Baguio Benguet Chapter, under the leadership of Dr. John Hiyadan, together with the Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center Department of Neurology and ANGELS Initiative Philippines, conducted the activitiy attended by 80 Emergency Medical Workers representing BCEMS, CDRMO, BFP, 911 On Call Services Inc., Mover R87 Ambulance Services, Airbag Inc., Oxycare, BGH-MC OPCEN, and Emergency Room nurses.

February 26, 2026: Hub and Spoke in La Union.

Stroke hubs were opened at the Ilocos Training Regional Medical Center (ITRMC) and the La Union Medical Center (LUMC).

The activity spearheaded by Dr. Mary Grace Mystica held at the ITRMC drew 58 participants representing 16 different spokes from both private and government institutions.

The lectures were delivered by Dr. Cyrus Escabillas, Dr, Therese Reyes, Dr. Timothy Cinco, Dr. Steven Villaraza, and Dr. Dianne Ferrer.



BUILDING SYSTEMS THAT WORK



March 14, 2026: The 6th batch of SSP-Stroke Nurse Masterclass at the Makati Diamond Residences.

69 nurses representing 33 hospitals attended the face-to-face session which covered the first two modules of the program.

This brought to 376 the total number of stroke nurses who have undergone the program that was recognized and endorsed by the World Stroke Organization in 2025.

The SSP-Stroke Nurse Masterclass harnesses competence of participants in caring for and ensuring the safety of patients with stroke. Comprised of 50 hours of didactics and skills workshop and 20 modules of the Angel's Stroke Nurse Academy, the program conducted succeeding modules virtually via the Angel's Global platform based in the Czech Republic.

March, 2026: The Thrombolysis Expert Forum in Seoul, South Korea.



The SS, through President Dr. Ma. Cristina Macrohon-Valdez and WSO Board member and Philippine Representative, Dr. Epifania Collantes, engaged in invaluable discussions regarding the stroke burden of disease and highlighted key data on the performance indicators of Acute Stroke Ready Hospitals, based on the RES-Q data.

SSP's participation underscores the Philippines' commitment to advancing stroke care and fostering collaboration in the region and dedication to improving healthcare outcomes and strengthening SSP's network in addressing stroke challenges.

BUILDING SYSTEMS THAT WORK



April 15, 2026: A hub and spoke meeting for private hospitals in Caloocan.

Leading the discussion were Dr. Cyrus Escabillas and Dr. Maritoni C. Abbariao, Stroke Champion Camarin Doctors. The objective of having a first ever private hub was brought about by the talks involving private hospitals connected to 9 spokes in the area. These are San Lorenzo Hospital Lagro, San Lorenzo Hospital Deparo, Padre Pio North Caloocan Hospital, Mark Vim Hospital, North Caloocan Doctors Hospital, Novaliches General Hospital, Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Bermudez Hospital, Caloocan City North Medical Center, and Ace Medical Center Muzon. Dr. Therese Reyes, Dr. Steven Villaraza, Dr. Manilen Duenas, and Dr. Timothy Cinco served as faculty of the hub and spoke training.

April 25, 2026: A hub and spoke activity themed "Basic Education on Stroke: Frontline Assessment, Stroke Imaging, and Thrombosis" in Davao City at the SEDA Abreeza Hotel.

Dr. Julie Torres and Dr. Manolet Guerrero drew participants from the Southern Philippines Medical Cente, San Pedro Hospital of Davao, Metro Davao Medical and Research Center, Davao Medical School Foundation Hospital, Davao Doctors Hospital, Brokenshire Medical Center, Tagum Medical Center, Medical Mission Group Hospital Tagum, Davao Regional Medical Center, and the DAVAO 911 Emergency Responder.

The speakers were Dr. Torres, Dr. Shafiq Dexter Abou Zaki, Dr. Lourraine Bagares-Paez, Dr. Francis Gerwin Jalipa, Dr. Alfand Dy Closas, Dr. Giannina Go-Ong, Dr. Katrina Mantos-Ocat, RN Sweet Lorraine Bontia, and the SSP Faculty composed of Dr. Cyrus Escabillas, Dr. Therese Reyes, Dr. Anna Ma. Gabrielle De Castro and Dr. Jenielyn Nazaire.



BUILDING SYSTEMS THAT WORK

May 22, 2026: Training on Stroke Awareness, Prevention, and Community Response held at the Taguig Convention Center.

The SSP NCR Chapter joined the City Health Office of Taguig in conducting the activity, initiated and organized by NCD Medical Coordinato Dr Jisella Cueto, and was attended by barangay health workers from the NCD Movers.

Among the lecturers and facilitators of the whole day event were SSP NCR chapter lead Dr. Maritoni Abarriao, Vascular Neurologists Dr. Remy Berroya-Moreno, Dr. Therese Reyes, Dr. Geraldine Mariano, Dr. Jose Miguel Medrano, and SSP President Dr. Cristina Macrohon-Valdez, Stroke Nurses Januaria Canlas and Anne Caccam, and TPDH ER Head Nurse Audrey Pelaez



May 27, 2026: BUHAY TULAY: Celebrating Healing and Hope After Stroke: Co-Designing Bridges through Strength and Shared Stories.

SSP joined the event organized by the Tulong, Ugnayan ng Lingap at gabaY (TULAY) Project, held at the Verdure, Henry Sy Sr. Hall at the De La Salle University. The program featured presentations and a panel discussion where Dr. Jose Alvin Mojica of the SSP Rehabilitation Committee served as one of the panelists. Also in attendance during the discussion was SSP Board Member Dr. Manolete Renato Guerrero who is also part of the SSP Stroke Rehab Committee.



The day served as a venue for sharing the journey of empowered stroke survivors and household carers whose stories talked not only of recovery but also of hope for better days moving forward.

BUILDING SYSTEMS THAT WORK



May 30, 2026: The first Bayanihan Speech Therapy Caravan.

SSP Davao Chapter partnered with the Philippine Academy of Speech and Language Pathologists, Phil Academy of Rehabilitation Medicine and Innogen Pharma to put together the event themed "Living With Aphasia: Communication, Recovery, and Hope", held at the Garden Oases. The activity was initiated by SSP Board Member Dr. Manolete Guerrero, the lead of the Bayanihan Speech Therapy, and Speech Pathologist Dr. Carla Cuadro.

The program commenced with one-on-one screening by Dr. Aileen Matalog. Dr. Davilyn Quilantang, Dr. Marie Shennette Gayle Pepito, and Dr. Kevin Datukon.

A Lay Forum conducted Dr. Cuadro highlighted practical tips for family members on how to communicate with patients with aphasia. Dr. Leah Rodriguez, a speech pathologist with aphasia from Cebu, shared her insights and experiences that helped enlighten and inspire the audience.

July 3, 2026: Stroke Awareness training for Q-Citizens.

The SSP Quezon City chapter worked with the Hub-and-Spoke Stroke Network in conducting the activity intended to make communities in Quezon City equipped and ready for stroke-related eventualities.



The training was run by Dr. Cyrus Escabillas, Dr. Manilen Dueñas, and Chairman of the Department of Neuroscience of EAMC Dr. Levi Rejuso at the East Avenue Medical Center. The one-day event was born out of the initiative of Dr. Marissa Ong, the EAMC Neurology Residency Training Officer.

Community Health Workers from Districts 1–6 of Quezon City were on hand to learn scientific and practical knowledge and skills that would equip them to be of stroke-ready service to Q-Citizens.

BUILDING SYSTEMS THAT WORK



July 31, 2026: The SSP's newest academic initiative, Vascular Links: Fellows Collaborative Scientific Conference.

The academic initiative is a regular multidisciplinary forum designed to bring together Vascular Neurology fellows from various training institutions.

The inaugural session was conducted through the collaborative efforts of the SSP-NCR Chapter and the St. Luke's Medical Center–Quezon City Vascular Neurology Training Program.

The conference brought together experts from Neurology, Neurosurgery, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Hematology, Radiology, and other allied specialties in line with the goal of strengthening inter-institutional collaboration and advancing excellence in stroke education and patient care.

August 3, 2026: Hub and Spoke at the Amang Rodriguez Memorial Medical Center.

5 ARMMC Hub and spoke organizations were on hand in the event spearheaded by SSP stroke champion Dr. Cecille Mata-Racelis. The activity featured lectures given by Dr. Nicole Aliling. Dr. Cyrus Escabills, Dr. Manilen Duenas, Dr. Steven Villaraza, Dr. Therese Franz Reyes and Dr. Mark Timothy Cinco.

SSP President Dr. Ma. Cristina Macrohon-Valdez was also on hand to deliver a message of support for the initiative aimed to continue to raise stroke awareness in the communities.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All the accomplishments of the Stroke Society of the Philippines were made possible because of the invaluable contributions of the following:

Dr Lina Laxamana for initiating and conceptualizing the SSP website and Stroke PH App.

The BESTPH Team spearheaded by Dr. Geraldine Mariano and Dr. Migs Medrano.

The ASRH Certification Committee of Dr. Joey Navarro, Dr. Epifania Collantes, and the committee driving force Dr Allan Belen.

The Hub and Spoke Committee led by Dr. Cyrus Escabillas, Dr. Manilen Duenas, Dr. Therese Reyes, And Dr. Mark Timothy Cinco

The Stroke Nursing Masterclass under the leadership by Dr. Ma Socorro Sarfati, Dr. Epifania Collantes, and Ms. Belle Rogado.

The Speech Bayanihan Therapy led by Dr. Cristina Valdez, Dr. Manolete Guerrero, Ms. Carla Cuadro, Speech Pathologists Volunteer, and Innogen for the support.

We also wish to recognize the SSP-PNA-AFN Taskforce, composed of the following members:
Dr. Cristina Valdez, Dr. Jay Villavicencio, Dr. Migs Medrano, Dr. Chex Gacrama, Dr. Jane Lara, Dr. Cristina San Jose, Dr. Tinsay Cañete, Dr. Art Surdilla, Dr. Roselyn Pamatmat, Dr. Claire Enriquez, Dr. Lyn Lucena, Dr. Louie Gayao, Dr. Jeremy Cordero (IPP of the Philippine College of Emergency Medicine), Mr. Denver Rancap, and Crunchlab.

The Taskforce worked diligently with Philhealth to develop the Cost of Illness Analysis and National Clinical Stroke Pathway for both Acute Ischemic Stroke and Intracerebral Hemorrhage. Through their efforts, the coverage for stroke will be expanded and better suited to the needs of the Filipino people.

And finally, to our beloved pharma sponsors, especially Boehringer Ingelheim and Echimes, who stood by us through thick and thin and provided unwavering support for all our programs.