

PRESS RELEASE

PDRF, experts address mental health issues of frontliners during pandemic

SEPTEMBER 30, 2021, MANILA— The Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF)'s Project K3, in partnership with the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Aid Programme, recently organized a virtual roundtable tackling mental health issues of medical frontliners during the pandemic.

Entitled “Mental Health Matters,” the online event was attended by over 1000 participants from local government units, hospitals, and various sectors from all around the country. The discussion addressed the pandemic-induced mental health challenges experienced by medical frontliners such as exceptional stress, extreme workloads, difficult decisions, risks of becoming infected and spreading infection to families and communities, and witnessing deaths of patients.

According to the Philippine World Health Organization Special Initiative for Mental Health,¹ around 3.6 million Filipinos suffer from poor mental health.

Dr. Beverly Ho, Director of the Health Promotion Bureau of the Department of Health (DOH), said that DOH aims to “democratize” mental health services and promotion.

“This means that you and me, all of us, have a role to play in improving the environment for all of us such that our behavior and how we react to situations will be more supportive and enabling,” Dr. Ho added.

Experts from universities from different regions and the Commission on Human Rights explored possible solutions and shared their best practices to mitigate common mental health challenges for healthcare workers.

Panelists included Riyan Portuguez (Wellbridge Health Inc.), Pierce Docena (University of the Philippines Visayas Tacloban College), Mariflor Gatchalian (University of Perpetual Help DALTA), and Milagros Maquiling (Differently-Abled Women Network). Dhanika Garcia of MentalHealthPH moderated the discussion.

Furthermore, the discussion emphasized the need to normalize dialogue on mental health in society and better equip health workers and individual citizens to administer Psychological First Aid to those in distress.

¹<https://doh.gov.ph/press-release/YOUR-MIND-MATTERS-DOH-CALLS-FOR-UNIFIED-RESPONSE-TO-MENTAL-HEALTH>

“So a lot of the work we do in governance, in development, in humanitarian aid - a lot of this is tangible. But important things are not visible and these are resilience, mental health - we cannot see them but they are so powerful. We are hoping that this webinar will be an instrument to empower that invisible but very powerful space,” said New Zealand Aid Programme Manager Dyan Rodriguez.

“Mental health is one of the major problems of this prolonged emergency. This is especially true of our healthcare frontliners who face danger, despair, stress, and difficulties,” said PDRF President Butch Meily. “What we can do is continue to support our medical personnel, nurses, and doctors. Social cohesion, a sense of solidarity, and being able to cope are key to getting us through the pandemic.”

A recording of this webinar as well as more free resources on mental health such as an online certificate course on mental health and well-being and downloadable posters and infographics are available on [Project K3's website](#).

Project K3 or Kalinga para sa Kalusugan ng Komunidad is an initiative of PDRF and New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Aid Programme that aims to strengthen the health system capacities of LGUs, hospitals, and communities around the country to deal with the COVID-19 crisis and future disruptions through innovative training and community education.

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About PHILIPPINE DISASTER RESILIENCE FOUNDATION

Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF) is the country's major private sector vehicle and coordinator for disaster resilience. As an alliance of businesses dedicated to building the disaster risk management capabilities of the private sector in the country, PDRF aims to contribute to the sustainable development and the general welfare of the Filipino people. For more information, visit www.pdrf.org.

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