

## THE HISTORY OF OSPITAL NG PALAWAN



The Puerto Princesa Hospital came into existence in 1901 through the initiative of Willsey Minik, the Military Governor of the Philippines and the District Health Officer and the first Chief of Hospital - Dr. Jose Toribio. The hospital was then situated in a one-fourth hectare lot overlooking the Puerto Princesa Bay. It was a usual bodega during the Spanish Regime that was remodelled to serve the purpose of a hospital. It had a 20-bed capacity and was maintained by the American Military Government. In 1904, the hospital administration and maintenance was taken over by the provincial government.

There were only five personnel to man the hospital at the start. Dr. Jose Toribio was the Chief of Hospital; Mr. And Mrs. Vivencio Herrera - the first nurses; and Mr. San Inspector and Mr. Francisco Badenas the first attendants.

Through the years until 1938, due to retirement or transfer, the Chief of Hospital were: Dr. Jose Toribio, retired; Dr. Aniceto Penalosa; transferred; then Dr. Mariano Legaspi. The first Administrative Officer was Mr. Herminigildo Palayon, followed by Mr. Joaquin Ybo. The nurses at one time or another were: Mr. And Mrs. Vivencio Herrera and Miss Paical. The Resident Physicians were Dr. Angel Sanchez, then Dr. Bernardo Buenafe. The attendants were Mr. Inspector and Mr. Badenas, then Mr. Juan Arruira.

Administrative control of the hospital was transferred to the Bureau of Hospitals upon the creation of this Bureau in 1938. The Medical Officer-In-Charge was Dr. Jose T. Kamatoy, the Administrative Officer was Mr. Arsenio Asuncion. The nurses were Mr. Silverio M. Dacanay, Mr. Clodualdo Cayabo, and Miss Constanca West. The attendant was Miss Guadalupe Sumaldo. The helpers were Mr. Teodoro Cabasal, Mr. Engracio Magura, Mr.

Modesto Adem and Cleofas Cayabo. The cook was Mr. Lucio Badajos.

Dr. Kamatoy was succeeded by Dr. Conrado Mauricio upon transfer; Dr. Nestor Matro took over until after World war II. Immediately after the war, the hospital transferred to Barangay Sicsican and then in 1945, the hospital was transferred to the town proper behind the old City Hall of Puerto Princesa. In the same year, Dr. Matro resigned and Dr. Tomas Dimayuga succeeded him.

In 1947, Dr. Eleazar L. Rivera took over as Chief of Hospital and in 1949; Mr. Silverio M. Dacanay became the Administrative Officer.

In 1950, the hospital was transferred to its present site an 18,900 square meter lot donated by the Rafols family in Barangay San Miguel. The hospital was built out of its war damage claim. Funds for its maintenance came from the Provincial Government of Palawan and financial aid from the National Government.

The inability of the Provincial Government to maintain the hospital financially prompted the National Government to take over in 1954.

Due to the death of Dr. Rivesa in 1971, the administration of the hospital was turned-over to Dr. Nagui who was assisted by Administrative Officer Meliton C. Viernes and Chief Nurse Mariana Bajar.

The Puerto Princesa Hospital has remained as a 25-bed hospital inspite of proposals for an increase in bed capacity for so many years. The need to increase its bed capacity was evidenced by its bed occupancy rate and the fact that it is the Provincial Hospital of Palawan. Finally in 1980, the bed capacity was increased to 50 which was by then inadequate to cope with the needs of the population it serves.

Dr. Nagui was succeeded by Dr. Juanito V.

Dueñas on January 23, 1973 until December 31, 1984.

The integration of the Provincial Health Office and Puerto Princesa Hospital as one agency known as Integrated Provincial Health Office - Palawan was implemented in 1985 making the Provincial Hospital as District with the catchment areas of: Puerto Princesa City, Aborlan, Narra, Roxas, Dumaran, Araceli, San Vicente and Cagayancillo.

In 1992 RA 7413 was signed into law by President Aquino upgrading the hospital into a 75 bed capacity hospital. Upgrading has not been budgeted however, hence implementation was not undertaken.

In 1993, RA 7160 or the Local Government Code of 1991 was implemented thereby devolving secondary and primary hospitals to the provincial government.

Dr. Primo de Vera took over as Assistant Provincial Health Officer for Hospital Services until 1993 due to transfer of Dr. Dueñas in Oriental Mindoro.

In February, 1993, Dr. Antonio A. Palanca Jr. and Ms. Cecilia M. Martinez took over as Assistant Provincial Health Officer for Hospital Services and Administrative Officer respectively due to separation from the service of Dr. de Vera and Mr. Viernes.

Management of the Nursing Service was turned-over to Mrs. Agnes B. Palao due to the retirement of Mrs. Lina.

Realising that government cannot do it alone, the private sector was mobilised. Thus Pangkalusugang Kooperatiba ng Palawan (PKP), a cooperative pharmacy was born out of the need for reasonably and easily accessible source of medicines for patients. It also served as funding source for hospital expenditures which cannot be sourced out from government.

Knowing the limitations of in-house medical staff, private consultants practising in the hospital were mobilised and made to participate in the management of patients. Thus attempt was made to departmentalize services even without available plantilla positions. The major departments were Medical, Pediatric, Surgical-Orthopedic, Obstetrics – Gynecology wards, Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), Emergency Room, Out-patient Department, and Operating – Delivery Room.

Private rooms were also constructed with the funds coming from the New City Commercial Center (NCCC), the city's largest department store.

The Tangay Foundation also started the construction of the OR-DR Complex which was

completed with the funds coming from the Women's Health and Safe Motherhood Project.

In 1999, RA 8549 was passed upgrading the Puerto Princesa Hospital to a 150-bed tertiary hospital which shall be known as Ospital ng Palawan and transferring it to the National Government took effect on January 1, 2004. Upgrading however, has not been implemented due to budgetary constraints.

Shortage in nursing and other manpower was resolved by hiring staff on a job order basis. Initially, wages of the casual personnel were sourced out from the funds of Provincial and City Government. Starting 1999 however, wages were included in the regular hospital budget, but was separated in 2004 when the hospital was renationalized. Fortunately, the hospital provided a good training ground, for fresh graduates and many applicants come despite the low compensation.

Since the position of the Chief of Hospital was vacant during the renationalization, Dr. Jazmin Abing-Chipeco, Director of Center for Health Development IV-B (MIMAROPA) acted as interim Officer-in-Charge until Dr. Glorifino M. Juan Jr., Medical Center Chief I of Dr. Paulino J. Garcia Memorial Research and Medical Center was reassigned to Ospital ng Palawan under Department Order 1338 as Officer-in-Charge in August 9, 2004. Mrs. Norma Y. Flores, Clerk III acted as Officer-in-Charge of the Administrative Division.

Housebill No. 6761 sponsored by Congressman Abueg was passed by Congress amending RA 8549 by upgrading the Ospital ng Palawan into a 400 bed capacity Medical Center to be known as the Palawan Medical Center under the Department of Health. This bill is now pending in Senate as of this writing.