

2016 International Day of Medical Physics: Down the Line in The Philippines' Medical Physics: Inspiration for Developments

A trail down to the cornerstone of the Philippines' medical physics served inspiration to its professionals as they gathered to celebrate this year's International Day of Medical Physics. Thirty years hence, there were significant developments in medical physics in the country, thanks to its pillars - DOH Assistant Secretary Agnette Peralta, Former PNRI Nuclear Regulatory Chief Eulinia Valdezco, and JRMMC Chief Medical Physicist Lilian Rodriguez, who served as keynote speakers during the IDMP celebration held at East Avenue Medical Center, Quezon City on November 7, 2016.



ASec Agnette Peralta (center) and 'co-pillars' Valdezco and Rodriguez fondly recalls the humble beginnings of their work in establishing medical physics in the country as SMPRP celebrates the International Day of Medical Physics 2016

In mid-1960's, the Philippine General Hospital acquired the first Cobalt-60 teletherapy unit in the country. Mr. Luciano "Tatang" Nigidula was trained on-site by an IAEA Expert, thus he became the first Filipino medical physicist.

There was soon a need for trained medical physicists. In the early 1980's the first medical physics academic program was established in the University of Santo Tomas, one of the country's leading universities and medical schools. This after Valdezco submitted to IAEA a proposal to seek technical assistance from IAEA after discussions with Eric Browne of the New Zealand Radiation Laboratory who earlier went to the Philippines for an IAEA-sponsored project. The Department of Science and Technology likewise granted scholarships for graduate students.

Today, medical physicists who went through this program serve a number of hospitals and establishments providing core technical and consultancy services. Others are now leading several government agencies as researchers, regulators, lecturers or resource persons. The organization is strongly credited for such influx of manpower to the Philippines medical and nuclear science sectors.



The country's only medical physics organization, recently renamed Society of Medical Physicists in the Republic of the Philippines (SMPRP), formerly known Philippine Organization of Medical Physicists (POMP) has ever since coordinated activities to advance medical physics. Part of this year's IDMP was the oath-taking of its new officers. Sworn were Dan Joseph Manlapaz, President, Randal Remoto, Vice-President, Jeana Lee Sablay, Secretary and Julie Cruz, Treasurer. Marlon Tecson, outgoing President of POMP, also presented a report on all POMP activities in the past two years. Norberto Abella was also commended for his hard work on the organization's SEC registration and recognition by the Professional Regulations Commission. The event wrapped up with dinner and socials.



SMPRP officers take oath of office (above) while members and 'founders' pose for commemorative photo (below)

Every year, IDMP is celebrated all around the world in recognition to the pioneering work of Marie Curie on radioactivity and in raising awareness of the important and growing role of medical physics and its professionals in the clinical environment, education, research and development of medical technologies. This year's theme focused on "Education in Medical Physics: the key to success. Prof. Slavik Tabakov, current president of the IOMP, said that taking an active part in the education and training activities in medical physics is important for the profession and for healthcare in general. Having trained more than a thousand medical physicists, particularly in the College on Medical Physics in Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics in Trieste, Italy, he said that this is "the best contribution to the young generation of medical physicists".



Today, there is strong influx of medical physics professionals, thanks to the concerted efforts of its founders and members.