A Medical Mobile Clinic for Underserved Communities in the Philippines

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Background

1. Health care geographic distribution
   - > 75% of cities and municipalities in the Philippines have < 1:20,000 physician to population (Department of Health, 2018).
   - Nearly 50% healthcare professionals in the Mega Manila Region and many pursuing work abroad due to higher income.

2. Availability of primary care
   - Undersupply of non-hospital and primary care services, with doctors 91% hospital-based.
   - Additional socioeconomic and geographical barriers, such as rural and remote areas.
   - Patients face up to 58% OOP payments in-hospital.

3. High incidence of noncommunicable diseases
   - Disproportionately affects low-income patients with severe complications of noncommunicable diseases (NCD) due to lack of preventative care.

Lessons Learned

- Since 2017, the MMC has completed over 7,043 patient visits.
- Top diagnoses are NCDs: hypertension, type 2 diabetes mellitus, dyslipidemia
- In 2020, 86% of our 1610 hypertensive patients maintained their blood pressure within target
- > 70% improved or controlled blood sugar

As our clinic operations expand, the clinic team continues to develop and strengthen partnerships, relationships, and rapport in the communities. On top of being a reliable, established primary care option for many, ABCGH serves as a trusted organization in time of need—from the 2020 Taal volcano eruption to the COVID-19 pandemic.

ABCGH continues to serve the medically underserved communities of Pampanga, Philippines at a time when COVID-19 has exacerbated existing health inequities, such as unequal healthcare access for low-income, urban underserved, rural, and indigenous populations.

Project Description

Launched in 2017, the Medical Mobile Clinic (MMC) was implemented to establish longitudinal health care via low-cost medical visits, free medications, and culturally-appropriate health education. ABCs established partnerships with local government and non-government organizations to identify 18 medically underserved communities in Pampanga, Philippines. Each community is guaranteed monthly medical service to establish continuity of care. Electronic health records (EHR) are maintained on a data analytics platform, providing ABCGH the ability to not only collect data digitally, but to track data-driven clinical and research outcomes.

Community Partner

ABC’s for Global Health (ABCGH) is a non-profit organization dedicated to finding practical solutions to health problems of disadvantaged and underserved communities.

In 2009, Dr. Julieta Gabiola founded ABCGH to address the gaps in long-term care she witnessed as a medical mission volunteer physician for several years in the Philippines.

ABCGH seeks to expand health care access, especially for those with noncommunicable diseases, through
- Advocacy for health equity and access
- Betterment of community health and well being
- Commitment to sustainable continuity of care.

We aim to leverage mobile clinic outreach and improve NCD outcomes by strengthening community health education and implementing novel technologies that address research-based needs and increase health care access in underserved populations.

Outcomes

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Recommendations

- Expand additional mobile medical clinics to other medically underserved areas of Pampanga and other Philippines provinces
- Continue to establish local community and government partnerships to ensure sustainability within communities
- Continue driving social determinants of health research to better serve the unique needs of each community

Acknowledgments

- Stanford Center for Asian Health Research and Education (CARE)
- ABCGH staff, Barangay officials, volunteers, mentors, supporters, & communities
- ABCGH Statistician Hilana Roman, Medcheck - Amiel Herrera
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