

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Differences in health status among various sectors and regions of Filipinos have widened in recent years. These disparities may indicate deficient economic and social policies, showing the need to reprioritize interventions to promote equity, fairness and immediate action. Unnecessary and unfair differences in the health care delivery system which deprive certain sectors and areas (especially the poor and the far-flung areas) of basic services must be reduced so that the highest possible health standards may be shared among the widest majority, given the limited resources allocated for health. This thematic issue of Public Policy on health will discuss various issues that affect the health of these sectors.

Annual check-ups have been an important part of the health care delivery system, wherein apparently well members of society seek health examinations and tests to determine the early stages of the presence of disease. For schools, this allows the healthy status of students to prevent the spread of infectious conditions common in the young age group. For the labor force, wellness is one of the requirements for acceptance and for renewal employment. For some employees who occupy high positions in business and industry, the annual check up is more comprehensive, earning the monicker of the "executive check-up". This expanded screening of disease conditions and illnesses utilizes more examinations in the apparently well, taking up hospital resources and bed space, which may deny or displace actual patients from using them. The paper of Morales, Dans, et al describes the situation and the process by which possible local solutions may be set in place.

In recent years, the public has become more aware of the problems of domestic child abuse and familial rape. So sensitive are these issues that many cases were left unreported. With the establishment of Child Protection Units in many hospitals and regions of the country and the development of various processes in dealing with a victim of child abuse, there is now a better system concerning this problem. The legal problem of giving justice to the victim of familial rape involves punishing the senior relative, be it parent or another relative. The issues surrounding the death penalty in these cases, and their effects on the familial and psychological health of the victim are discussed by Madrid and Castillo who are among the foremost advocates of the care of the abused child in the country.

Medical missions are very common in the country, and seem to be common only in this country. The paper by Almario, Nanagas et al describes this phenomenon of providing health services to various groups and regions in the country. While it would seem to have some high profile and impact on the population, many questions are raised by this practice. The issue of sustainability and conflict with existing local health care systems at times leads to problematic situations whenever these medical missions take place, especially if these are sponsored by politicians and foreign groups or individuals.

The Department of Health remains the most important policy making body for health matters in the country and has a vital role in providing most of the important supplies and equipment for the key health institutions such as hospitals and other health units. Procurement of supplies and equipment are expected to be more efficient using a central system, with less need for expert consultancies and a greater reliance on bulk orders. Inherent problems such as transport and actual utility and preference in the specific local setting exist and are highlighted in the paper by Galvez-Tan et al.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maria Jeth". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'M' and 'J'.