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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Phil. Global Healthcare Forum**

**DoH: Government developing Universal  
Healthcare and global healthcare travel**



**ALLIES FOR GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE HEALTHCARE.** Department of Health Secretary Enrique Ona (center) leads a display of unity among various officials in the Philippines' private and public health sector at the **1st Philippine Global Healthcare Forum** held last 11 November 2011 at the National Kidney and Transplant Institute (NKTi). Ona and other health sector leaders pledged to work together to improve Philippine healthcare to conform to international standards and make sure there is universal healthcare of the best quality for all Filipinos. Shown in photo are (from L to R): HealthCORE CEO Juris Umali-Soliman; PSQua president Dr. George Repique; PMA-CME Commission chairman Dr. Ramon Abarquez, Jr.; PhilHealth OIC & VP for Quality Assurance Group Dr. Francisco Soria; WHO Representative Dr. Woo-Jin Lew; DOH Usec., Teodora Herbosa; Phil. Retirement Authority GM Veredigno Atienza; Department of Health Usec. Teodoro Herbosa; Phil. Retirement Authority GM Veredigno Atienza; 1<sup>st</sup> Phil. Global Healthcare Forum Convenor Joyce Socao-Alumno; DOH Secretary Enrique Ona; DTI Usec. Cristino Panlilio; Professional Regulation Commission chairperson Hon. Teresita Manzala; Phil. Nurses Association president Dr. Teresita Barcelo; Phil. Dental Association president Dr. Roberto Tajonera; Phil. Council on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (PCAHO) president, Dr. Tomas Maramba; and Phil. Orthopaedic Association vice president Dr. Geoffrey Batad.

THE GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO developing the Philippines as a global healthcare travel destination while at the same time providing Universal Healthcare to Filipinos.

“While global healthcare is a very good opportunity for the Philippines’ economic development, our government will be pursuing it while making sure that Filipinos receive

Universal Healthcare through public health insurance and other means,” said Department of Health Secretary Enrique Ona during the 1<sup>st</sup> Philippine Global Healthcare Forum held at the National Kidney and Transplant Institute Auditorium last November 11.

Ona explained that both Universal Healthcare for Filipinos and global healthcare travel (also referred to as “medical tourism”), are neither mutually exclusive nor opposed to one another. He said that developing both at the same time will provide tremendous benefits to Filipinos in terms of economic development, job opportunities and healthcare services.

“The Department of Health will always prioritize the provision of healthcare to all Filipinos, especially the poorest of the poor who cannot afford medical services and treatments. This is why our government is pursuing the creation of universal healthcare insurance for all Filipinos through Philhealth and the DOH. These efforts are complemented by our development of our healthcare system to international quality so that we can also become an international hub of healthcare services—like what other Asian countries are doing,” he said.

According to Ona, developing the Philippines as an international healthcare hub has several benefits for the Philippines.

First, developing global healthcare sets international, high-quality benchmarks for healthcare providers in the Philippines; this creates a much better quality of medical and health services available to all Filipinos.

Second, the dollars earned from global healthcare will go to Filipino healthcare providers (hospitals, clinics, spas, wellness centers) and will also be put back into the public healthcare system.

Third, global healthcare gives hospitals and other healthcare providers in the Philippines enough capital, through increased earnings and foreign investments, to improve their facilities and expand their patient capacity. This means these healthcare providers will have enough resources to allot to medical care and services to poorer patients. This also means that more Filipino doctors, nurses, lab technicians and other healthcare professionals will be hired locally—reducing the number of those forced to seek jobs overseas.

“Global healthcare is not just about earning dollars. In order to develop global healthcare, the Philippines’ healthcare facilities, services and standards must first be improved to conform to international quality standards. Only when these have been upgraded can the Philippines become an international healthcare travel hub. So, in essence, global healthcare is about improving our healthcare sector so that it is able to provide the best possible health services to Filipinos and overseas patients,” said Joyce Socao-Alumno, Executive Director & Chief Strategist of HealthCORE which is the convenor and organizer of the 1<sup>st</sup> Philippine Global Healthcare Forum.

The benefits of global healthcare, the readiness of the Philippines in providing it, and strategies for improving the Philippine health sector to conform to international standards were discussed at the 1<sup>st</sup> Philippine Global Healthcare Forum. DOH officials and other

Philippine healthcare sector leaders attended the forum with some foreign speakers who are most respected experts in global healthcare.

“When India entered into global healthcare, our entire healthcare sector improved. It was not only the hospitals providing global healthcare that benefitted. Those hospitals serving the local population benefitted from improved standards of medical treatment and care; they also increased their capacity and resources to serve local patients through the transfer of knowledge and technology they received when global healthcare was developed,” explained Dr. Sanjiv Malik of India, a hospital administrator in GCC and expert consultant for Asian healthcare travel. Malik, who gave a lecture during the forum, runs hospitals in India, other Asian countries and the Middle East.

The Philippines’ neighbors including Singapore, India, Malaysia and Thailand are presently earning billions of dollars by providing international quality healthcare to overseas patients who go to their hospitals for treatment. The Philippines is being eyed as potentially the next global healthcare hub in Asia.

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**HealthCORE** is the center of healthcare management, research and communications in various aspects of healthcare and medical tourism in the Philippines, propelling the growth of businesses engaged in healthcare, medical and wellness tourism and retirement and enabling them to be the preferred service providers of global healthcare travellers.