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PRESIDENTIAL NEWS DESK**

**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.
ON THE LAUNCHING OF THE LCP-NKTI LUNG TRANSPLANT PROGRAM**
[Delivered at the Lung Center of the Philippines, Quezon City | 23 January 2024]

Maraming salamat, Doctor *[please take your seats]*

Dr. Rose Marie Rosete-Liquete, who is not only the Executive Director of the NKT Institute, but apparently is a former playmate of mine in San Juan. *[laughter]*

That's – I didn't know that and you weren't telling me until you got up on the stage, but that is a remarkable coincidence and here we have found ourselves today in the same place, doing the same things that my parents did and furthering the services of our medical healthcare professionals; Dr. Vincent Balanag, the Executive Director of the Lung Center of the Philippines; Dr. Edmund Villaroman, Chairperson LCP-NKTI Lung Transplant Program;

Senator Sonny Angara, to whom we owe very much to, he has done some very good work in supporting the establishment of this lung transplant institute and center, and we--- Dr. Balanag already has many plans for the future, we will be coming to you again so that we can complete *[applause]* we can complete the rebuilding, I was a little sad to hear that the damage that was caused by the fire of '98 has not yet been completely rehabilitated, and I think that's the first thing that we have to look to *[applause]* it would--- it seems like it has been too long a delay to wait since 1998 to bring us back to the standards, or at least the capacity that we had in 1998 to now, which is already 2024, so, we are playing catch-up, but we will do all that we can;

Congressman Gato Jr., the--- of course, our host in the city of Quezon City, the Honorable Joy Belmonte; my fellow workers in government; distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

Today, we celebrate the collaboration of two hospitals, which, more than neighbors, are partners in battling diseases that inflict pain on our people and on their pockets as well.

They also share one significant trait, and that is courage, in full display when COVID-19 was on a rampage.

The trenches, where frontliners in white coats made their defiant stand, run through these two hospitals.

You saved many, many, many lives. If there is one postcard of grit which captured your stubborn resistance, it was that of Lung Center personnel, fashioning PPEs out of garbage bags, in the very beginning when we could not get enough of these PPEs, when the influx of patients overran all our supplies as we were unprepared for such a plague to befall our country

And when I saw that picture captioned with the call "*Laban Lung!*" – *ito yata ang fighting slogan n'yo "Laban Lung!"*– *[applause]* I found myself catching my breath--- what breath I could catch

because I was suffering COVID myself, and I was still trying to recover--- it was unfortunate because it was first time in my life that I go to the doctor and I asked them “what’s happening to me?” and the doctors would tell me “we are not quite sure” and the next question of course is “how do I get better”, and the answer also is “well, we’ll try everything but we are not quite sure yet”. Of course, we have grown--- it has improved greatly since then and that is something--- that is why the Lung Center--- having been a longtime asthma and allergy sufferer, has been something that I can understand and sympathize with very, very closely.

Nais naming ipaabot ang aming taus-pusong pasasalamat dahil sa inyong katapangan, your gallant acts do not fade with time, then gratitude has no expiry date either.

In LCP and NKTl, these words ring true: “Never was so much owed by so many to so few.” While the pandemic is over, the diseases which prompted the establishment of the LCP still remain, and in increasing numbers.

It is evident in the country’s top 10 tally of morbidity, or leading causes of sickness, wherein pulmonary-related ailments occupied Nos. 1, 5, 7, and 9 in 2022.

As to leading causes of death, pulmonary-related diseases took up the 6th, 7th, and 10th slot in the same year.

These are more than numbers because behind them is an immeasurable amount of people whose lives have been degraded, whose dreams have been shattered by disease that bankrupt a family, as well as the patient.

The partnership between LCP and NKTl can be a template in which hospitals pool their resources and share assets to boost patient care and improve bottom lines.

The launch of the LCP and the NKTl Lung Transplant Program is an application of the proven maxim that two heads – two hospitals – are better than one.

This creates the infrastructure for lung transplants in the country, with the first one to be done within 2024 .

I wish you Godspeed in this endeavor.

I know you will succeed because you are torchbearers of the tradition of bold and brave initiatives upon which medicine has advanced, and diseases have retreated.

It is the same grand vision which prompted the establishment of the LCP, and the NKTl, and the Heart Center, during an era when great things were not only dreamed of but developed.

Build, Better More is of the same ethos which should animate us today, to march forward, instead of just running in place.

We will not--- we should stop being content with the piecemeal, or belittle big dreams as too ambitious, too difficult but instead embrace the audacious if we want to leave a better world, then we found it.

We will begin by learning from the rich trove of lessons that the pandemic has left us.

Through the *Doctors to the Barrios Program*, we are training doctors because their development is critical to the realization of universal healthcare.

Through the Regional Specialty Centers Act, we have established 131 functional specialty centers nationwide, nine of which, are designated as lung specialty centers to bring lung care closer to our people.

By 2028, we aim to establish an additional 179 specialty centers, seven of which are dedicated as lung care centers.

Through an expanded nursing education program that CHED and DOH is implementing, we are addressing the current shortage of this essential health workforce while ensuring their future supply.

All of these support what the LCP-NKTI Lung Transplant Program seeks to achieve: To provide competent, committed, and compassionate care to our people.

So, in closing, let us remember that healthcare is our covenant with the people, a public commitment driven by neither political agenda nor personal legacy projects.

In this hospital where heroes walked and worked, may this program be a testament to our unwavering duty to serve the Filipinos.

I cannot forget my father's advice to me, and he said "the first service that government must provide to its people is healthcare" and because no matter how successful a society is, no matter how wealthy a person is, that wealth and that success – they cannot enjoy if they're not enjoying a good health.

Again, congratulations to the LCP and NKTI!

Mabuhay kayong lahat!

Maraming maraming salamat sa inyong serbisyo, maraming maraming salamat sa inyong sakripisyo, at ang patuloy ninyong trabaho para alagaan ang taong bayan ng Pilipinas.

Thank you and good morning. *[applause]*

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