



PHILIPPINE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

THEME: "BUILD, BUILD, BUILD PMA! BUILDING THE FUTURE TODAY."

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June 24, 2020

PMA Statement on the June 23, 2020 Video of Cebu Gov. Gwendolyn F. Garcia

The Philippine Medical Association, which is the umbrella organization of physicians in the Philippines, denounces the recklessly imprudent assertions as well as the personal attacks made by Cebu Gov. Gwendolyn F. Garcia in the video she released on June 23, 2020. She belittled some doctors who took exception when she promoted the practice of tuob to treat CoViD-19.

We wish to correct Gov. Garcia's dangerous claims and address her insults to our members who have dedicated their very lives to serve their patients. These include Gov. Garcia's own constituents in Cebu, which has become the second epicenter of CoViD-19 in the Philippines.

1. The number of CoViD-19 cases is steadily rising in the world and in the Philippines. Recently, it has increased in a much higher proportion in Cebu.
2. Despite great efforts, there is presently no cure or vaccine for this coronavirus, although certain medicines have shown promise in treatment.
3. CoViD-19 is primarily transmitted by droplets. In certain cases, it can be aerosolized (that is, dispersed as solid or liquid particles in gas) and transmitted much more easily, such as when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
4. The World Health Organization has issued reminders regarding the care that must be taken in handling coronavirus cases. It oversees and supervises the ongoing studies of trial medicines and treatments, which do not include steam inhalation or tuob.
5. The practice of tuob essentially involves a person's inhalation of steam that comes from a container with hot liquids. To maximize the concentration of the steam, a large piece of cloth covers the person as well as the container itself.

6. Contrary to Gov. Garcia's claims, tuob does not treat CoViD-19. Worse, it may facilitate the virus's aerosolization and contamination of nearby persons, objects, or surfaces. Equally as disturbing, it may foster a false sense of security and well-being that in turn may cause an infected person to spread the virus.

7. Given that CoViD-19 is spread by droplets, the inhalation of steam by an infected person may result in the aerosolized spread of the coronavirus upon mere exhalation, sneezing, coughing, or the like. To emphasize, the virus may remain active upon the human body, surfaces, and objects for minutes, hours, or even days. While the practice of tuob may offer relief to the person, it unduly increases the risk of virus spread and transmission to nearby individuals, surfaces (for example, the floor where the container was placed), or objects (for example, the piece of cloth used to cover the person, the exposed chair or table, etc.). Worse, if the person was asymptomatic and not yet tested, then the feeling of well-being from the steam inhalation may cause this person to relax or forget safeguards such as wearing of face masks and/or face shields, social distancing, regular handwashing, and meticulous hygiene.

8. Gov. Garcia cannot insist on a remedy that is not only unsupported by science, but is actually likely to have adverse consequences. This is counterproductive, irresponsible, and dangerous. As a public figure, her statements carry weight among her constituents. It behooves her to ensure that her actions do not result in harm.

9. In the same manner, it is the responsibility of the PMA and all concerned parties to call out harmful statements that will adversely affect the public health and cause an increase in active cases. When doctors fulfill this duty, it should not result in personal attacks, especially from one who is supposed to be a public servant.

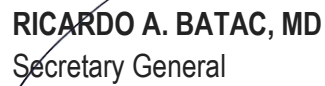
10. The hospitals and health facilities in Cebu are already swarmed with both confirmed and suspected CoViD-19 cases. Gov. Garcia's demoralizing and unfair tirade against frontliner physicians and worsens an already difficult situation. Instead of thanking them for their priceless service and their good faith in promoting the correct safeguards and health protocols, she attacked their integrity and good name. This is completely unacceptable.

The PMA and its 84,500 member-physicians continue to work closely with the government to address one of the most critical challenges of our times. In this pandemic, everyone should work together and support one another in facing and overcoming this pandemic. We call on our partners in government to help us achieve this shared goal.

We serve, we share.

We heal as one.

We pray as one.



RICARDO A. BATAc, MD
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