



My warmest congratulations to the University of the Philippines Manila College of Public Health (UPM CPH) on the publication of this special issue of the *Acta Medica Philippina*, the *National Health Science Journal*, collaboratively published by the UPM CPH and the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development of the Department of Science and Technology (PCHR-DOST). Of course, in connection with this special issue, I would like to offer my congratulations as well to the UPM CPH on the success of the 53rd Asia Pacific Academic Consortium for Public Health (APACPH) conference held in September 2022. The conference has proven to be a rich wellspring of information, research, resources, and collaborative activities related to “Advancing the Role of Higher Education Institutions in Attaining the Health-related Sustainable Development Goals.”

It has been almost a decade since 193 UN member states, including 53 from the Asia-Pacific region, adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and declared our commitment to attaining the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, accomplishment reports revealed that we are lagging far behind in achieving these goals, especially the targets related to health. Communicable diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV continue to pose a threat in the Asia-Pacific region. We have a lot more to do to eliminate communicable diseases and ensure that every individual has access to affordable healthcare.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) play a significant role in advancing the UN’s health-related goals. Through instruction, HEIs can foster and disseminate knowledge from generation to generation. Symposia, conferences, and seminars organized by HEIs, such as the 53rd APACPH Conference, are a great avenue to raise awareness about health-related issues. By educating our country’s future leaders, we can help build an informed community asserting its right to quality and affordable health services.

In addition to teaching, research and extension programs are critical in generating new knowledge. HEIs can also broker partnerships with the government and the private sector — partnerships that would lead to the transfer of knowledge from the academe to the community. In short, as we, the HEIs, we must remain proactive in and dedicated to achieving a sustainable healthcare system in the Asia-Pacific region.

This special issue of the *Acta Medica Philippina* will serve as a key knowledge resource in this quest to achieve our health-related targets under the SDGs, informing and inspiring future generations of public health experts, policymakers, and advocates for years to come. Once again, my congratulations to the academic community of the UPM CPH and the 53rd APACPH Conference Committee, headed by its overall chair, Dr. Maria Margarita Lota, and the special issue’s editor and former UPM CPH Dean, Dr. Vicente Belizario, Jr.

And to our brilliant and ever-hardworking health professionals and researchers in both UP and beyond, may you continue to champion the health needs of the community, and to come up with ideas, inventions, and solutions to further address global health challenges.

Thank you very much.

Angelo A. Jimenez

President

University of the Philippines