

## UST Rheumatology joins I.M. MoRE: The USTFMS and USTH Department of Medicine Movement for Rehabilitation of the Environment

7:00 AM to 12:00 NN Sunday, 03 June 2018

Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat and Ecotourism Area

*By Gerald B. Natanauan, MD*

With the aim of promoting environmental awareness and socio-civic action, the USTH Department of Medicine Section of Rheumatology together with the UST Faculty of Medicine & Surgery actively participated in the clean-up drive at Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat and Ecotourism Area (LPPCHEA) on Sunday, 03 June 2018.

LPPCHEA was established in 2007 and became known as the first critical habitat to be declared in the country. On March 15, 2013, it was recognized as a wetland of international importance (under Ramsar Convention). Thus, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources - National Capital Region (DENR-NCR) included the area among the critical habitats in the country requiring aggressive rehabilitation.



Bird watching station at the freedom island (one of the two islands inside LPPCHEA)

The half-day activity started with a boardwalk through Freedom island (one of the two islands inside LPPCHEA) towards the cleaning activity area. Marching through the island provided majestic breath-taking views of mangroves, ponds & lagoons and serene forest areas.



Freedom Island – Boardwalk. A walkthrough towards the cleaning activity area

The activity started at the open bay where participants were oriented on the objectives, scope of the involved area and tasks on hand. Participants were provided with broom sticks, rake, garbage pickers and sacks. Earlier this year, the University of Santo Tomas together with other educational institutions like San Beda University and Mapua University also joined at the same site- coastal clean up activity in celebration of Earth Day in LPPCHEA on April 21, 2018.



Coastal clean-up activity with the UST medical residents, fellows and consultants.

Dr. Jude Guiang, head of the community service program of the Department of Medicine of the UST Hospital was joined by Dr. Marilyn Ong-Mateo, chair of USTH Department of Medicine in full support and infectious enthusiasm, fostering camaraderie among the medical consultants and trainees who participated in the activity. They all strongly reinforced the importance of rehabilitation of the environment, embedding this into the conscious minds and efforts of the young doctors.



Rheumatology fellows in-action with Dr. Ong-Mateo during the coastal clean-up drive.

Overall, approximately seven sacks of garbage were collected by the efforts of the whole team. The contents were mostly plastics, styrofoams, left-away personal belongings like toothbrushes, plastic combs and some bottles.

The activity not only helped rehabilitate the environment but most importantly taught the participants to be more socially responsible for the care of Mother Nature. Among the active participants were the consultants of the Dept. of Pulmonology, fellows from the section of Rheumatology and other subspecialties, medical residents and interns, whose passionate efforts were gratefully acknowledged by the Department of Medicine.



The USTFMS and USTH Dept. of Medicine participants including Rheumatology fellows.

The full morning concluded with a warm thanksgiving, everyone looking forward to more of these fruitful environment-friendly endeavors.

*"The future will either be green or not at all."*

*-Bob Brown*