

# RHEUM FOR KIDS AND TEENS CHRISTMAS PARTY

✦ By: Adrienne Katrin M. Guiang-Valerio, MD ✦

Christmas has always been more than just a time for celebration; it's about coming together, sharing love, and giving back. This year, we had the privilege of celebrating our annual Christmas party on December 1, 2024, at Jollibee UST Dapitan.

The University of Santo Tomas Hospital, Section of Pediatric Rheumatology, led by Dr. Bernal, together with her fellows, organized this special event with a heartwarming purpose: to bring a little cheer to the lives of children battling rheumatic diseases. With games, raffles, prizes, and Christmas giveaways, the day was a beautiful reminder of the spirit of giving.

We were fortunate to have four incredibly generous donors—parents of our patients diagnosed with Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE)—who contributed to the prizes and Christmas bags for the children. We had 84 attendees, including both our patients and their guardians. Of those 84 attendees, 33 were children living with various rheumatologic conditions, such as systemic lupus erythematosus (16), chronic arthritis (13), juvenile dermatomyositis (2), chronic recurrent multifocal osteomyelitis (1), and multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) (1).



The program began with a heartfelt opening prayer led by one of our own patients. Dr. Bernal then welcomed everyone, reminding us all to enjoy the moment and forget our worries. From there, the fun began: games for the kids, teens, and even the parents. There was so much energy in the room as families bonded over friendly competition. Winning wasn't the goal, though; it was the joy of participation and the sense of togetherness that mattered most. Every participant, whether a child or an adult, walked away with a prize.

One of the highlights of the day was the group photo. Seeing the smiles of the kids—so pure and full of joy—was truly special. It was a moment of unity, a snapshot of resilience, and a reminder of why we do what we do.





As the program came to a close, each child received two Christmas bags, along with a gift and chocolates, so they could enjoy a little extra sweetness at home with their families. It wasn't just about the material gifts, though—it was about showing the children that they are cared for and valued, not because of their illness, but for their courage and strength.

In her closing remarks, Dr. Bernal wished all the children good health and happiness for the coming year. She reminded them—and all of us—that as their medical team, we will always be there for them, ready to offer care and support. Most importantly, she reminded us to keep Jesus at the center of this Christmas season.

Each patient has a unique story, and this event was a chance to share our blessings with them. More than anything, it was a reminder that these children are not defined by their illnesses. They are resilient warriors, overcoming obstacles every day, and they are truly special. This Christmas celebration wasn't just a party—it was a Thanksgiving, a moment of unity, and a heartfelt reminder of the love and strength within the Pediatric Rheumatology family.

