

# BREAKING BARRIERS IN LUPUS CARE

BY : SEPHORA J. MATILOS



## THE BARRIER

**Lupus** is a disease that defies simplicity—it can affect multiple organs, mimic other conditions, and progress unpredictably. The barrier lies not just in its complexity, but in the gap of confidence and awareness among clinicians, limiting timely diagnosis and effective management.

## THE CHALLENGE

With only a few rheumatologists in the Philippines, many **lupus patients** rely on **non-specialists** for early recognition and management. Yet, for many clinicians, lupus remains an intimidating diagnosis, often leading to delays in treatment and missed opportunities for better outcomes.



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|---|------------|
| <b>INTERNIST-RHEUMA</b>                 | <b>252</b> |
| <b>PEDIA-RHEUMA</b>                     | <b>34</b>  |
| <b>TOTAL PHILIPPINE RHEUMATOLOGISTS</b> | <b>286</b> |

## THE MOVEMENT

Driven by the sole purpose of reaching areas with limited or no access to rheumatologic care, Dr. Sandra Navarra led a committee to develop the workshop “**LUPUS FOR EVERY CLINICIAN**”. This pioneer project aimed to bridge lupus care gaps by equipping healthcare providers with the skills and confidence to manage rheumatic diseases in underserved communities.



**HOSPITAL NG PALAWAN**

*In partnership with*

**Lupus Inspired Advocacy (LUISA) & Philippine Rheumatology Association**



## LUPUS for EVERY CLINICIAN

**Interactive Case-based Symposium-Workshop**

1-5 PM, Tuesday, 25 February 2025

Ospital ng Palawan auditorium, Puerto Princesa City, Palawan

2 PRC CPD 3 PCP CPD 2 PMA CPD

**Open to Palawan-based medical practitioners. Registration is free.**

LUPUSforEVERYCLINICIAN



## THE DESTINATION

Palawan is an island province renowned for its white sand beaches, diverse marine life, shipwreck sites, and limestone rock formations, is rich in natural resources. However, it has limited access to rheumatologic care. Recognizing this gap, Puerto Prinsesa Palawan was selected as the first destination for the pioneer project. More than a symposium, it marks the start of a movement towards inclusive, transformative and accessible lupus care.



## THE SYMPOSIUM-WORKSHOP

The **“Lupus for Every Clinician”**, an interactive case-based symposium-workshop, was held last February 25, 2025 at the Ospital ng Palawan auditorium in Puerto Prinsesa City, Palawan. The event was organized in partnership with Lupus Inspired Advocacy (LUIA) and the Philippine Rheumatology Association (PRA). The objectives were to illustrate the multi-dimensional aspects and clinical presentation of Lupus and highlight the importance of integrated, coordinated care for every lupus patient. This was opened exclusively to Palawan-based medical practitioners. The symposium offered free registration, making it accessible to all clinicians.



# ONE IN BREAKING BARRIERS AND PIONEERING EDUCATION

The symposium featured an esteemed panel of specialists who shared their insights and expertise:

- Dr. Sandra V. Navarra – IM-Rheumatologist
- Dr. Juan Javier Lichauco – IM-Rheumatologist
- Dr. Lyndon John Llamado - IM Rheumatologist
- Dr. Sharon Tepeng Ong-Lo – Dermatologist
- Dr. Ramon Miguel Molina – IM-Rheumatologist & Intensivist
- Dr. Shayrel Lagan-Ragas – IM-Hematologist
- Dr. Rhaffy Rapacon – IM-Nephrologist

## THE INTERACTIVE CASES

A highlight of the event was the case-based discussions by Dr. Sephora J. Matilos and Dr. Norwin Philip L. Bation, both IM-Rheumatology fellows in training. The discussion opened with a 39-year-old female with SLE, presenting with a severe cutaneous flare and acute pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH). The second case featured a 30-year-old male with SLE, presenting with deep vein thrombosis (DVT), hemolytic anemia, thrombocytopenia, and lupus nephritis—a constellation of symptoms often seen in patients with antiphospholipid syndrome (APS). These real-world cases provided attendees with practical knowledge on recognizing lupus manifestations, interpreting laboratory results, and implementing evidence-based treatment strategies

## IN DEPTH BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Following the case discussions, attendees participated in breakout sessions, where they engaged in small-group interactive learning with experts in Rheumatology, Nephrology, Hematology, and Dermatology. These sessions provided a hands-on approach to analyzing diagnostic dilemmas, treatment protocols, and patient management strategies, allowing participants to apply their learning in a practical setting.



# A STEP FORWARD IN LUPUS CARE



As the symposium concluded, the resounding message was clear: education, collaboration, and patient-centered care are essential in the fight against Lupus. It remains a challenge in clinical practice, especially in regions where access to specialists is limited. This event is a step forward in equipping doctors with the knowledge and resources needed to break the barriers in lupus care.

For now, the success of the “Lupus for Every Clinician” symposium serves as a strong foundation for future initiatives, ensuring that **every clinician—with or without specialty—has the knowledge and confidence to diagnose and manage lupus effectively.**