

Special Feature:

Defying the odds brought about by Coronavirus infection



Julietta Alunan, a wife and mother of three, knows that she is truly blessed after she pulled-through from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and saved from the hefty medical bill by PhilHealth. This is her story.

“Eight days parang down ako. First four days nilalagnat-lagnat ako then inubo na ako, on my 8th day hindi ko na kaya.... nahirapan na akong huminga, ‘pag umuubo ako, hirap na ako dahil parang mapupugto na ang hininga ko.”

This is how Juliet describes her first eight-day experience before she finally decided to be brought to the hospital.

The day it all started

Few days before she acquired the flu-like symptoms, she accompanied her friend to a hospital and had several meetings with other friends.

“Sinamahan ko yung aking friend na magpapa-mammography. So two days kaming balik nang balik (sa hospital). And then may dinner ako sa friend ko, ‘yung dalawa (may) travel history sa Japan. Then, nagkaroon ako ng meeting sa Rotary, past president kasi ako ng isang Rotary Club dito.”

By March 24, Juliet was in the emergency room of a private hospital in Makati City. After going through several tests, she was admitted.

“After evaluating may situation, ni-require na akong ma-confine. Right at that moment sinwab na ako. Sa ilong ko yata meron na, sa lalamunan...”

The ordeal

At dawn of the following day, Juliet was informed by the doctors that she needs to be intubated, making her realize that she was in a critical condition and might be positive for COVID-19.

“Actually nung in-intubate ako malaki na ang duda ko na COVID positive na ako. Kasi ‘yun na ‘yung lahat ng manifestations ng positive COVID kapag sinabing difficulty of breathing parang ‘yun na eh, isa pa ‘yun sa isipan ko na positibo na yata ako,” Juliet recounts.

Alone in her room and with tube in her mouth to assist her breathing, the only thing that she could do is pray and think of her family.

True enough, her prayers never failed her. On her fifth day in the hospital, she could finally breathe on her own. With the tube removed, Juliet has to be under continuous medications and is not yet out of the woods. She still needs to do her part to fully recover from the disease.

Juliet fought hard, but her family and her medical team fought hard alongside her too. Her daughter continuously monitored her condition through her doctors.



“Mababait naman yung mga doctors, talagang nakiki-cooperate sila kung ano ‘yung situations ko, ibinibigay naman nila ng tama sa anak ko,” she said.

She was also very blunt in saying that she is very lucky to have had the best medical team, and for having been and brought to a good hospital.

“Full praises ako sa kanila at napakasuwerte ko. Ang kanilang nurses at nursing aids ay napaka-efficient. Even the doctors...’di ko alam kung ano ‘yung approach nila pagdating sa paggamot, napaka-proactive. Napaka-aggressive nila. Wala akong masasabi, lahat naging smooth sailing at maayos po.”

Juliet was treated by a total of 15 doctors with different specializations.

Over the moon

Nearing her 15th day in the hospital, Juliet received the good news which brought her into tears. She was already out of danger. She immediately shared the positive news to her daughter. However, the family needed to face another challenge and that is settling her hospital bill before heading home. In her 15-days stay at the hospital, her bill reached P1.3 million.

While Juliet and her family are aware that PhilHealth will cover the whole cost of treatment of COVID-19 patients, they initially did not fully rely on it. In fact, she was planning to get a medical loan from her company thinking that PhilHealth may not be able to shoulder her medical expenses.

“Kung ibibigay ng PhilHealth sabi ko salamat. Kasi ang focus ko ‘yung makalabas ako. May plan B ako just in case. Kukuha ako ng medical loan sa company namin. Syempre babayaran ko rin yun. For me ok lang kahit magkano ito, ang importante ligtas ako. Kasi ang pera kikitain mo eh. ‘Yun ang thinking ko kasi (sakaling ‘di ako) makakakuha ng full benefit ng PhilHealth,” Juliet related to this author.

But then, all her doubts disappeared when she actually experienced and realized that all that was said in the news really happened – PhilHealth indeed paid in full her treatment cost of P1.3 million.

“Nagpapasalamat ako kasi P1.3 million is P1.3 million. During that time talagang wala naman kaming ganung kalaking pera. Sobrang nagpapasalamat ako sa PhilHealth sa blessing na ibinigay nila sa akin. Blessing na gumaling ako, another blessing ‘yun (to be able to avail of PhilHealth benefits) talagang sobrang grateful po ako sa PhilHealth. Napakalaking tulong po sa akin at sa pamilya ko na nabigyan ninyo ako ng full benefit.”

Paying it Forward

Early this month, a public hospital in the country has appealed for COVID-19 survivors to donate blood and help those patients in critical conditions. The



convalescent plasma therapy is a treatment that uses anti-bodies of survivors to boost the immune systems of infected patients.

When asked if she is willing to donate plasma to help other victims of the COVID-19, she immediately volunteered, *“Yes, we (fellow survivors) are more than willing na mag-donate.”*

But before she will be able to donate her plasma, she needs to fully recover first from COVID-19, then needs to undergo a series of tests.

While still under home quarantine as of this writing, Juliet shared words of encouragement and hope to COVID-19 positive patients like her.

“Sa mga katulad ko po na may pinagdadaan po sa ngayon, yung mga COVID positive na mga pasyente, huwag po kayong mag-alala kasi ako po mismo ang makapagpapatunay na ang PhilHealth po ay willing tayong tulungan sa paraan na makakaya nila na tayo ay gumaling sa pagsubok na ito - na kaya nating mapaglaban ang sakit na ito.

Juliet now joins the long list of Filipinos who successfully survived COVID-19 with PhilHealth by their side. ###



Reference: Dr. Shirley B. Domingo, Vice President for Corporate Affairs and Official Spokesperson | Mobile No: 09171360964