

CHILD PROTECTION UNIT

Philippine General Hospital
Taft Avenue, Manila
CSC Pagasa Awardee, 2003
Group Category

Street children – young beggars, solvent sniffers, roving mendicants – have become a regular eyesore in most streets, parks and pavements of the metropolis. Even as they have cast a sorry shadow of the city, each of them has a story to tell. Often, these stories tell how they reached such sordid state.

Many a tale revolve on physical assault, dire poverty, sexual abuse and domestic violence. Realizing the need to address these pressing concerns of the young populace, the Philippine General Hospital (PGH) embarked on a special program focused on protecting the children from all forms of abuse. Thus, the birth of the PGH Child Protection Unit (PGH-CPU), the first unit of its kind in the country to offer comprehensive services for children who have been or are being investigated for possible abuse and exploitation.

Launched on January 22, 1997, the unit is part of the Department of Pediatrics of the PGH. It is situated at the Emergency Complex of the hospital. Composed of pediatricians, social workers, child psychiatrists, nurses and support staff, the unit provides comprehensive medical and psychological services to abused children and their families to prevent further harm and, more importantly, initiate the healing process.

Since 1997, the PGH-CPU has served 3,909 children, majority of whom were sexually abused. Other types of patients treated include those physically abused and neglected kids. Staff members are even willing to testify in court and give their expert opinion on the degree of abuse or neglect their clients have gone through. On the average, over 60 new patients are either seen or treated in the facility per month.

The PGH-CPU is composed of doctors Bernadette Madrid, Mariella Castilla, Stella Manalo, Cynthia Leynes and Norietta Balderama, registered social workers Dolores Rubia and Nenette Eser, and registered nurses Emily Java and Celieza Antonio. The Center takes pride in its being the only training center for child protection in Asia. A total of 48 doctors from Department of Health Regional Hospitals with Women and Children Protection Units (WCPU) have been trained at the PGH-CPU. It is also the national training center for DOH physicians on child abuse evaluation and management.

The PGH-CPU is a one-stop abused children treatment facility direly needed not only in urbanized areas but also in the *sitio* where child abuse may be unchecked. Heroes all, these women perform their tasks with vigilance tempered with compassion. Through them, this nation can truly find solace, justice, and hope. •