



Newborn Screening

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NEWBORN SCREENING IN THE PHILIPPINES



Participants during the Feb. 20 Luzon Phase II Orientation Seminar.

Newborn Screening, the essential tool in pediatric medicine worldwide, has now found its way to more hospitals around Metro Manila. The new participating hospitals include Jesus Delgado Memorial Hospital, Hospital of the Infant Jesus, Makati Medical Center, Manila Sanitarium Hospital, The Medical City, and University of Santo Tomas Hospital. The representatives were invited to attend the workshop held at the National Institutes of Health last February 20, 1998 and since March 15, the Newborn Screening Laboratory has been running their samples.

From the start, there was no difficulty in convincing them to join the Philippine Newborn Screening Project. This means that more doctors are aware of Newborn Screening. This is good news for the Study Group.

Indeed, it has been months now since a vigorous campaign to promote Newborn Screening was started. It included print ads in broadsheets to advertise the Sponsor-a-Child Project, interviews in shows like *The Doctor is In*, *Emergency* as well as interviews for articles in various publications. Thanks in part to the appealing way it was presented through media; the good news of Newborn Screening has given hope to both the medical and lay community alike. In fact, the Secretariat Office has been receiving calls from concerned parents inquiring about

Newborn Screening for months now.

The fact that more people have heard about it has made it easier for the Study Group to convince hospitals from other parts of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao to participate in the workshop held during the annual Philippine Pediatric Society at the PICC last April 28, 1998. Dr. Carmencita F. Domingo gave the opening remarks after which a compelling audio-visual presentation was given by one of its team leaders, Dr. Carmencita Padilla. Around 26 hospitals have expressed their intention to be included in the Philippine Newborn Screening Project.

Already standing on the brink of fulfilling its goal of nationwide screening, the Project still has to overcome numerous obstacles. Various problems have come and go over the short time that the project has been in operation; yet, the Newborn Screening spirit still prevails. Take the case of the devastating peso devaluation last year, which affected cash flow since all reagents are imported thus requiring payment in dollars. Despite the country's financial crisis the Philippine Newborn Screening Project is still able to maintain a fully functional Laboratory.

STUDY UPDATE

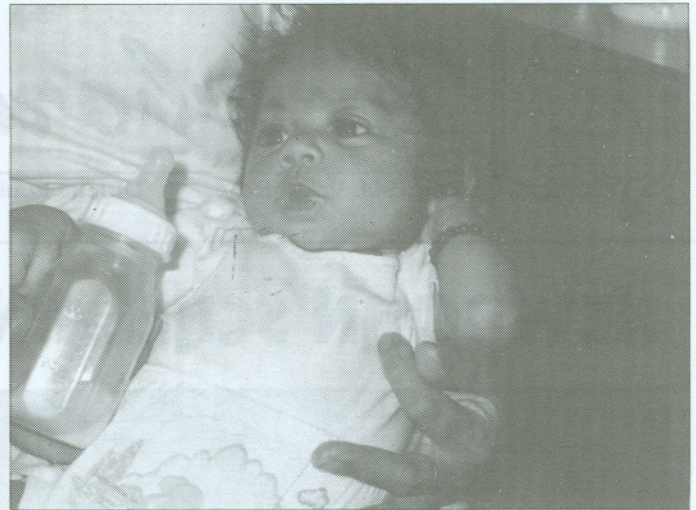
March 1998

<i>Total Number of Patients Screened</i>	53,667
<i>Total Number of Patients with Elevated Results</i>	178 (1:302)
CAH	38
CH	87
PKU	43
Gal	7
Met	3
<i>Total Number of Patients with Confirmed Results</i>	19
CAH	4 (1:13,417)
CH	12 (1: 4,472)
PKU	1 (1:53,667)
Gal	2 (1:26,834)

With the impending inclusion of more than 20 hospitals around the Philippines, other details like communication, courier service and training are still being worked out in order to facilitate the smooth transition in administrative operations.

Another issue facing the Newborn Screening Study Group that needs to be given attention soon is the procurement of funds for the screening of the charity patients. Approximately 50% of the 3,000 babies screened monthly are charity cases. The Project has been getting by so far despite the large deficit in its budget. Because of the expansion program currently being undertaken, urgent measures are presently being considered. The Newborn Screening Study Group has always been committed to screening ALL newborns, including those who cannot afford the service. A project was launched by the Perinatal Research Foundation called the Sponsor-a-Child Project for precisely this purpose. However, the outcome was not at par with the initial expectation. Needless to say, we are still doing our best to remain faithful to this cause.

Despite these dilemmas facing the Study Group, big bursts of inspiration are common in the Secretariat Office and the Laboratory. The Laboratory and the Secretariat Office have been privileged to witness happy endings to what would otherwise have been sad and tragic results. Nurses and medical technologists celebrate the arrivals and consequent visits of babies with confirmed metabolic problems through short breaks in order to play with the lucky charmers. They and the others that have yet to be discovered are the real reasons for the existence and the continuing



Mark Anthony Daño: saved from Phenylketonuria

expansion of the Philippine Newborn Screening Project.

There is no doubt that Newborn Screening will have a tremendous impact on the lives of those it touches. On the other hand, those who have gone without newborn screening will forever be affected physically and mentally as a result of this lack.

Newborn Screening is not reserved for the few, it should benefit all. The responsibility of sharing Newborn Screening to the rest of the Philippines lies on us and we must make sure that this ideal should eventuate. There is no room for apathy or complacency when the lives of future Filipinos are at stake. Thus, the challenge of reaching our goal continues.

Did You Know That...

- *the Philippine Newborn Screening Project has picked up 2 cases of Galactosemia last March 1998? This means that the local prevalence for this disorder is 1 in 26,834. Incidence range is 1:62,000.*
- *189 patients out of 3278 (all males) screened positive for Glucose- 6-Phosphate Deficiency (G6PD). This was discovered after Dr. Carmencita Padilla brought these samples to Japan for testing. Hence, G6PD will soon be included among the metabolic disorders currently being screened at the Newborn Screening Laboratory.*

SPONSOR-A-CHILD PROJECT UPDATE

You can now send your donations to the project by:

- ◆ Depositing your donations to the account of the Perinatal Research Foundation, Inc. (acct. no. 5148045957) at any Far East Bank branch
- ◆ Using your BPI credit card. Please inquire at the Secretariat Office at Tel. No. 5261710 and look for Ruby Peralta.

a n n o u n c e m e n t

Pick-up a copy of the March 1998, Vol. No. 3 issue of the MEDICAL OBSERVER.

Special Issue: NEWBORN SCREENING TAKES OFF

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