



Registered association for the promotion
of medical care and social support in
Northern Samar, Philippines

Bugko, December 2021

Dear members, dear friends, and supporters of Mabuhay!

We arrived in Clark on August 25th and, after our papers were checked, were taken to a quarantine hotel. This and transportation there had to be arranged before departure, otherwise you wouldn't be allowed to fly at all. You aren't allowed to leave the quarantine room for 10 days. Food is left outside the door. Everything is made of plastic and is immediately thrown away after use. Every day, I broke at least one fork, and then I was left with only a spoon to eat with. It takes some getting used to being locked in a relatively small room for 10 days without moving. The room isn't cleaned either. On the 7th day, employees from the local COVID lab come and administer another PCR test. The results come back a day later, but you aren't allowed to leave the quarantine facility. When our tests came back negative, as expected, we breathed a sigh of relief. It's not a given that we'll get a negative result, as we've heard of people being tested on four consecutive days and receiving two positive and two negative results. If the test had come back positive, our quarantine would have been extended for 14 days. However, we were lucky, as the staff was friendly and the rooms were clean.



After that, we returned overland for a good 27 hours to Bugko, where we spent another four days in home quarantine. That's the protocol here at the moment, and we've now been vaccinated four times: twice with Sinovac in the Philippines and twice with Pfizer in Germany. At least this gives us good protection against a serious coronavirus infection.

To get to Samar, you have to take the ferry. We were lucky to get the last ferry on September 6th, because then ferry service was suspended due to a

storm warning. On September 7th, Typhoon Jolina (Conson) hit us. Fortunately, there was no damage here, but there was more flooding in other regions. So it was a really exciting return trip.

The clinic opened on September 13th. Many patients had already contacted us beforehand and could hardly wait to come to the clinic in Bugko. The first patients arrived at 5 a.m. Unfortunately, we saw many very ill patients again because they didn't dare go to the doctor for fear of being declared a Covid patient. The clinic is full of patients again, just like before the Corona pandemic. On average, 75 patients visit the clinic per day. They are willing and able to travel very long distances to come to us. Our radius is a good 100 km and anyone who has been here knows what it means to travel such a distance. Traveling is permitted again, but it is very difficult. At the moment there is a plane to Manila once a week.



Thanks to large-scale vaccination campaigns and entire vaccination holidays, a large portion of the population here in Northern Samar has been vaccinated. The number of infections has dropped dramatically, and at the time you receive this letter, there are fewer than 20 active cases in the entire province. Masks must still be worn, but face shields are only required in enclosed spaces, such as malls and on airplanes. That's certainly a relief.



And now, there's more news. Dr. Rio Stephanie B. has been working with us since September 13th. She comes to our clinic once a week. In addition to consultations, she also performs minor surgical procedures. She's an absolute godsend, and we wouldn't want to be without her. Before opening her own small practice, she worked in Cebu.



In October, we were able to recruit Dr. Perlyn A., who just completed her exams in Tacloban and is working at the local provincial hospital before beginning her residency in gynecology in Manila. In her free time, she always comes to the clinic and examines patients. She will do this until February, then move to Manila.



Dr. Lydia Q., our old doctor—she's now 82 years old—is also coming once a week again. She didn't come during the peak of the coronavirus pandemic because her age puts her in the vulnerable group.



We now have a doctor in the clinic three times a week. Not always the whole day, but it's a huge help.

With all this good news, we set off for Tacloban on November 15th to register the clinic with the DOH (Department of Health). This required a lot of paperwork, but we managed to do it in time for the last deadline of the year. The registration was necessary because of the new UHCL (Universal Health Care Law), which is intended to guarantee free access to medical care for the entire population. The law exists, but its implementation is still difficult, as there are many hurdles to overcome, the population is very large at 110 million, and there are always political hurdles to overcome. After evaluating our documents, a team from Tacloban will come to inspect our clinic. Bureaucracy often prevents quick assistance.



On November 29th, Dr. Hil Dineros, a plastic surgeon who has close ties to our American doctors, unexpectedly visited us. Unfortunately, he, too, couldn't tell us whether there would be another mission next year to operate on our patients who require general anesthesia. He immediately jumped in and operated on patients with Dr. Rio. He promised to come more often next year so that the outpatients would be taken care of.



On November 4, the 12-17 age group was vaccinated with Pfizer for the first time here in Northern Samar. The largest vaccination day was November 24, when 3,517 people were vaccinated with Pfizer in one day. As early as 4:30 a.m., people were queuing outside the mayor's office to get vaccinated. One can only hope that the flow doesn't slow down and that the willingness to be vaccinated remains.



On November 20, we celebrated Sister Veronica's 70th birthday with her family and volunteers, as far as COVID-19 allowed. It was a sunny day, and the children in the village were delighted to have spaghetti and ice cream to celebrate.



So, the coronavirus had a grip on this year as well. Fortunately, there were also many beautiful moments, such as our visit to Bonn and the reunion with friends and family, the new doctors who are coming to us, and the fact that we can travel more again, even if not like before.

We remain grateful for our volunteers who have been and continue to be at our side every day. And have done so for almost 15 years now. We would like to thank all of you again who have continued to support us with financial

resources and donations in kind. Despite our great distance, we know and realize how much this project means to you. All of your help is being received and used where it is needed; Sister Veronica and I are committed to that.

Since the numbers in Germany have risen so sharply again this winter, I wish you all the best in staying healthy and that the booster vaccination helps prevent a severe coronavirus infection, so that we can all see each other again soon.

And today, we wish you all a blessed Christmas! Let us all hope for a good, less stressful, and perhaps better year in 2022.

Yours, grateful

Sabine Korth

Malipayon nga Pasko (Merry Christmas) aus Bugko!



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