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Position Paper

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The Help of Technology to the Philippine Government's response to the Coronavirus pandemic

Technology supports development and ideas in the present. Today, artificial intelligence and virtual reality have marked the revolution of every aspect in society, from health, to finance, and national security. As the world faces a global crisis brought by the new coronavirus, technology helped in confining and aiding the victims. A study by Schatz, G. (1985) reveals the impact of technology to health care, specifically to nursing facilities. It states that “Technology can improve the efficiency of a hospital and improve the quality of care delivered to patients. Some medical technology, however, is quite expensive. Further, the process of integrating new technology is complex and has a far-reaching impact for administrators and doctors. This chapter presents an innovative analytic framework to identify and analyze the key factors — administrative, legal, and medical — which should be examined to prepare for and facilitate technology integration by hospitals and physicians.” This shows the potential of every government in aiding and giving a response towards a health crisis. The Philippine government, as it faces the emerging pandemic, utilized technology in every way they can. We can also witness numerous ways how foreign countries responded to COVID-19 with the help of modern technology present in our time. But several limitations can be seen due to issues and controversies in the country, also to consider the Philippines as a third world country. What aid did technology give in times of this health crisis to the Philippines? How did the government utilized technology and used its advantages to aid the victims of coronavirus? What will be the state of this country if we conducted research and gave funds toward solutions and precautionary measures against a health crisis?

On 31st of December 2019, a cluster of pneumonia cases of unknown cause was first reported from Wuhan, China. It was later established to be a new coronavirus. The disease, now named as coronavirus disease (COVID-19), has been confirmed in different countries outside of China, including the Philippines. The World Health Organization (WHO) has been working with governments to build preparedness and response capacities in countries to contain the outbreak and prepare for possible community transmission. WHO provide stockpile of personal protective equipment (PPE) to support priority countries in their preparedness efforts. Initial stocks were given to the Department of Health (DOH) for the use in health. The PPE’s are comprised of masks, examination gloves, respirators, isolation gowns and other equipment that will help protect frontline health workers as they diagnose and treat patients. The global science community has demonstrated that Science can respond quickly with advanced techniques, technologies, and the immediate dissemination of research results in a largely transparent and focused science research effort. WHO upheld the Research Institute of Tropical Medicine (RITM) to enable performing of indicative testing for Coronavirus in nation through the conveyance of reagents and synthetics. RITM would now be able to deliver confirmatory results within 24-48 hours of receiving samples. WHO provided Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR)

equipment to RITM so they can run different tests not only for COVID-19 but other infectious diseases such as HIV, polio, influenza-like illnesses and severe acute respiratory infections.

In the Philippines, innovation with the use of technology were utilized. “In the battle against the coronavirus, health workers in the Philippines used a drone in Pasig City to spray disinfectant on streets and houses. The DJI MG-1P octocopter drone-worth GBP 17,000-was flown over a residential street by officials in Pasig City in the Metro Manila region. The machines have a 10-litre payload and are usually used for pesticide spraying in agriculture, but have been modified to tackle COVID-19 infection. These drones are used in China as robots for aerial spray and disinfection. Originally, they were designed to spray pesticides on farms, but have found new use in the war against COVID-19.” (Limos, 2020). This is a good example of how technology helped in containing the spread of COVID in the Philippines. Even with this help, we should always remember the minimum health standards and protocols: washing hands with soap and water, wearing masks, social distancing, using alcohol and hand sanitizers, keeping your environment clean are other ways to even lower risks.

With our given situation in the Philippines, being a third world country, we lack the research and development for new emerging technology that may aid this new virus. New and modern technology available in countries like France, New Zealand, Japan, China, and America may help the Philippines in big ways to stop the spread of coronavirus. Also, if the current administration focused on the said virus, rather than prioritizing other matters, we may see results of flattened number of cases and less disruptions in the economy. The utilization of technology, especially today, have a copious impact on the people. With its help, we may be outside of our homes interacting with one another and having classes physically. Technology is what we did not have in previous pandemics, which lasted for years. Now, with this digital age. We can track disease activity in real time, we can screen individuals and populations for disease. In terms of clinical management, we rapidly diagnose infected individuals; monitors clinical status; predicts clinical outcomes; provides capacity for telemedicine services and virtual care.

Moreover, the help of technology as a response if the Philippine government invested into its fine research and development during this coronavirus pandemic may impact our number of cases to lessen its stem and emersion. Technology helps in the search for vaccines and permanent aid. The Iron Lady of Asia and former senator of the Philippines, the late Miriam Defensor-Santiago, filed Senate bill no. 1573 or the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act which may fund our research on preparedness and solutions to this crisis. The bill is designed to keep the public prepared for various emergencies, from natural disasters to mass casualties. “This bill is built upon such wisdom by seeking to strengthen national response and preparedness for public health emergencies, such as those which result from natural disasters and severe weather, recent outbreaks and pandemics, bioterrorism, mass casualties, chemical emergencies and radiation emergencies,” Bills like these should be put into laws for us, Filipinos, to face the consequences less and heal more.

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