CHALLENGES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THALASSEMIAS
Philippines

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OVERVIEW OF THE PHILIPPINES

• CURRENT POPULATION: 106.5M

• TOTAL LAND AREA: 298,170 Km² (115,124 sq. miles)

• RACIAL GROUPS: Malay, Chinese, Spanish

• BIRTH RATE: 23.7 births/ 1,000 population

• EMPLOYMENT RATE: 94.7%

• AVERAGE ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME OF FILIPINO FAMILIES: ~267 thousand Philippine pesos (or ~5 thousand USD).

• National Health Budget, DOH: 167.9B per year
CHALLENGES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THALASSEMIAS

• GOALS
  - To provide proper medical management including accurate diagnosis ideally with its molecular basis for existing cases
  - To provide the affected family well-informed counseling about the future course of the illness and the relative risks of having further affected children

• PHILIPPINE HEALTH SYSTEM
  - Private/ Government hospitals
  - Out of pocket payment for medicines and hospital bills
  - Reimbursement policy (PhilHealth; Personal and family insurance)
CHALLENGES IN PREVENTION and CONTROL

- Lack of public awareness
- Ethical/ Legal/ Religious concerns (abortion is not allowed)
- Absence of a patient registry (BaTha; Thal Center of the Philippines; PSHBT)
- Absence of national guidelines for prevention, control, and mgt.
- Absence of policies for chronic diseases incl. thalassemia
- Low priority of thalassemia in Philippine health system
- Screening
  - Absence of policies for screening
  - Absence of premarital/ carrier/ prenatal screening
  - Inclusion of hemoglobinopathies (started 2015) in expanded NBS program
- Genetic counseling only available in the Metro-Manila area
CHALLENGES IN MANAGEMENT

• Diagnosis of Thalassemia
  - Limited diagnostics are only available in big hospitals in the Metro-Manila area (CBC, HPLC, CE)
  - Molecular analysis available only in few hospitals in the Metro-Manila area
  - Expensive

• Treatment of Thalassemia
  - Blood transfusion/ iron chelators available only in few hospitals and expensive
  - MRI T2* for monitoring is available only in few hospitals in Manila but costly
  - Absence of stem cell transplantation
  - Lack of multidisciplinary team approach care
ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES

• Regulatory Issues
• Education on genetics and genomics
• Funding for researches on thalassemia
  - Unknown gene frequencies for thalassemias
• Access to information
• Procurement of related equipment and reagents
• Personnel Training (doctors, genetic counselors, lab personnel)
THANK YOU!