

Southern Philippines Medical Center in 16 historical documents

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History is a significant part of an institution's identity. Piecing together a detailed narrative of an institution's past requires looking for proof from different possible sources and weaving all the information gathered to create a coherent story. Today, as the Southern Philippines Medical Center (SPMC) celebrates its 100th year as a health care institution, many versions of its history exist.¹⁻⁵ Despite successfully portraying SPMC's rich past, these existing accounts slightly vary from one version to another. To contribute to the growing collection of SPMC's historical elements, we are presenting legislations and official government documents that refer to this century-old hospital in Davao Region.

The source documents below offer an as-close-as-possible and verifiable view of what transpired in the past. Gathering documents related to SPMC was not a simple task, since certain events (e.g., World War II, transfer of hospital site, administrative changes, etc.) may have destroyed some of the primary source documents. Our search for source documents was reasonably thorough. We looked for archived legislations and official monthly, quarterly or annual reports of government offices from several online repositories. We searched the issuance database of the Department of Health (DOH), the archived local issuances in the SPMC Administrative Office, and the files of several offices in SPMC. We went through some historical documents from private and government-owned libraries and museums in Davao City. We also interviewed several retiring employees, retirees and relatives of past employees of SPMC who may have access or who could point us to relevant documents.

Most of the legislations, issuances and official reports of government offices included in this listing were downloaded from online sources. The Davao City Library gave us access to an important Mayor's Report in the 1950s, and the Sangguniang Panlungsod Library of Archives in Davao City provided us a copy of an office memorandum from the mayor of Davao City on the inauguration of one of the buildings of SPMC. We could not retrieve many online or physical documents that we have initially identified from several articles written about SPMC. They were probably either missing from the archives or simply disposed of by offices that did not find them relevant. The biggest impediment that systematically precluded further exploration of significant historical documents related to SPMC was the fire that razed the 92-year-old original concrete hospital building in J.P. Laurel Avenue, Davao City in 2013. The fire burned all physical historical records kept in a storage room located in the main hospital building.

The 16 documents presented in this article are listed in chronological order and classified under the several names that SPMC has been known for within the past century. We listed the document titles exactly as they appeared in their respective sources along with the respective dates of reporting or approval. Short descriptions of the contents of the documents are also provided.

DAVAO HOSPITAL

1. An Act appropriating funds for the necessary expenses of the Government of the Philippine Islands during the fiscal year ending December thirty-first, nineteen hundred and eighteen, and for other purposes, Act No. 2727

Approved: December 20, 1917

To date, the oldest document found regarding Southern Philippines Medical Center's inception is a copy of a 1917 act passed by the Philippine Legislature, appropriating an amount for the "purchase and acquisition of equipment... for the Davao Hospital..."⁶

2. An Act making appropriations for Public Works, Act No. 2736

Approved: February 15, 1918

In 1918, Act No. 2736 was passed for the appropriation of the "purchase, survey and registration of land, improvement of the grounds, and construction and improvement, and



SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES MEDICAL CENTER

IN 16 HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

REPORT OF THE GOVERNOR GENERAL OF THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS TO THE SECRETARY OF WAR FOR 1919

FEBRUARY 19, 1920

- Declared that the construction of the hospital building in Davao started in May 1919 and that the front wing was 80% complete by the end of the year

REPORT OF THE PHILIPPINE HEALTH SERVICE FOR 1919

OCTOBER 7, 1920

- Reported that the permanent concrete hospital building in Davao was nearly completed



DAVAO HOSPITAL*

ACT NO. 2727

DECEMBER 20, 1917

- An Act appropriating funds for the necessary expenses of the Government of the Philippine Islands during the fiscal year ending December thirty-first, nineteen hundred and eighteen, and for other purposes
- Provided funds for equipment and furniture for Davao Hospital

ACT NO. 2736

FEBRUARY 15, 1918

- An Act making appropriations for Public Works
- Provided funds for the construction of hospitals in non-Christian provinces

REPORT OF THE GOVERNOR GENERAL OF THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS TO THE SECRETARY OF WAR FOR 1918

MARCH 15, 1919

- Mentioned that a temporary wooden hospital pavilion was constructed in Davao by the Bureau of Public Works

ACT NO. 2785

DECEMBER 21, 1918

- An Act appropriating funds for the necessary expenses of the Government of the Philippine Islands during the fiscal year ending December thirty-first nineteen hundred and nineteen, and for other purposes
- Stipulated the budget for personnel services and operating expenses in Davao Hospital

REPORT OF THE PHILIPPINE HEALTH SERVICE FOR 1920

JULY 5, 1921

- One of the oldest documents that mentioned 'Davao Public Hospital'



DAVAO PUBLIC HOSPITAL

REPORT OF THE MAYOR OF DAVAO CITY FOR 1950

JANUARY 6, 1950

- Reported the damages sustained by the buildings of 'Davao General Hospital' during bombings in World War II

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION FOR 1932-1933

JANUARY 25, 1933

- Mentioned that a private patients' pavilion was constructed in Davao Public Hospital

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR FOR 1921

APRIL 25, 1922

- Announced the inauguration of the public hospital in Davao on November 28, 1921

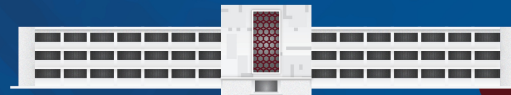


DAVAO GENERAL HOSPITAL

REPUBLIC ACT NO. 1859

JUNE 22, 1957

- An Act to establish a Regional Medical and Training Center in Davao City and appropriating funds therefor



DAVAO REGIONAL MEDICAL AND TRAINING CENTER

MEMORANDUM TO ALL CITY OFFICIALS, CHIEFS OF OFFICES AND/OR DEPARTMENTS IN THE CITY OF DAVAO

DECEMBER 10, 1964

- Sent by the Office of the Mayor of Davao City to different government officials in Davao City to inform them about the inauguration of the Davao Regional Medical (and) Training Center on December 12, 1964

MINISTRY OF HEALTH ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 12

DECEMBER 2, 1986

- Transfer of the Nervous Disease Pavillion from Davao Medical Center to the Mental Hospital and for other purposes



DAVAO MEDICAL CENTER

BATAS PAMBANSA BILANG 319

NOVEMBER 14, 1982

- An Act changing the name of the Davao Regional Medical and Training Center in the City of Davao to Davao Medical Center

REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7210

MARCH 6, 1992

- An Act increasing the bed capacity of the Davao General Hospital from three hundred fifty (350) to four hundred (400) beds, and appropriating funds therefor

REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9792

NOVEMBER 19, 2009

- An Act changing the name of the Davao Medical Center in Davao City to the Southern Philippines Medical Center, increasing its bed capacity from six hundred (600) to one thousand two hundred (1,200), upgrading its service facilities and professional health care, authorizing the increase of its medical personnel and appropriating funds therefor



SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES MEDICAL CENTER

* Not an accurate representation of the original building.

maintenance of the hospitals in non-Christian and special provinces.”⁷ Act No. 2408, a previous legislation passed in 1914, classified Davao Province as one of the non-Christian provinces in Mindanao.⁸ By virtue of Act No. 2408, funds for the construction of a hospital in Davao Province was provided for by the government through Act No. 2736.

3. An Act appropriating funds for the necessary expenses of the Government of the Philippine Islands during the fiscal year ending December thirty-first nineteen hundred and nineteen, and for other purposes, Act No. 2785

Approved: December 21, 1918

Act 2785 was a legislation that stipulated the budget for personnel services and operating expenses in Davao Hospital. For the year 1919, salaries and wages were appropriated for one resident physician, one superintendent and property clerk, three nurses, four ward attendants, one cook, one assistant cook, and five laborers. An amount was also appropriated for “(c)onsumption of supplies and materials, including laundry, medical and surgical supplies for dispensaries, hospital, the Mati sickward, and for the subsistence of officer, employees, and patients of the Davao hospital.”⁹

4. Report of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu. In: Report of the Governor General of the Philippine Islands to the Secretary of War 1918 (January 1, 1918 to December 31, 1918)

Reported: March 15, 1919

The report of the Governor General for the year 1918 mentioned that a temporary wooden hospital pavilion was constructed in Davao by the Bureau of Public Works to accommodate patients until a concrete hospital building could be used. At this time, the government had obtained and cleared a site for the permanent hospital building and requisitioned part of the construction materials.¹⁰

5. Report of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu. In: Report of the Governor General of the Philippine Islands to the Secretary of War 1919 (January 1, 1919 to December 31, 1919)

Reported: February 19, 1920

The report of the Governor of Mindanao and Sulu for 1919 declared that the construction of the hospital building in Davao started in May 1919 and that the front wing was 80% complete by the end of the year.¹¹

6. Report of the Division of Mindanao and Sulu. In: Report of the Philippine Health Service for the Fiscal Year from January 1 to December 31, 1919

Reported: October 7, 1920

The report of the Philippine Health Service for the year 1919 described the state of the construction of the government hospital in Davao. At the time of reporting, the “permanent concrete hospital building” was nearly completed, but because of the growing number of patients, the sickward for laborers of the Bureau of Public Works was utilized as a temporary public hospital. The temporary hospital was provided with necessary equipment and a laboratory, and was operated by the Philippine Health Service. The report also mentioned that the concrete building that was under construction could accommodate “as many as 50 patients.”¹²

DAVAO PUBLIC HOSPITAL

7. Report of the Division of Mindanao and Sulu. In: Report of the Philippine Health Service for the Fiscal Year from January 1 to December 31, 1920

Reported: July 5, 1921

One of the oldest documents that mentioned the name ‘Davao Public Hospital’ was the Philippine Health Service annual report for the year 1920. The document reported that, despite the great need for more personnel in the existing hospital, the hospital staff have performed major operations in the “very inadequate” operating room and successfully treated 16 cases of typhoid fever with “intravenous injection of an emulsion of attenuated [*sz*] living typhoid bacilli.” A short portion of the document reported that the new hospital building would have a 50-bed capacity and that its construction was estimated to be finished by June 1921. Another part of the document mentioned that, on 22 August 1920, Dr. Simeon Macasaet was appointed Resident Physician of Davao Public Hospital.¹³

8. Report of the Secretary of the Interior. In: Report of the Governor General of the Philippine Islands (For the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 1921)

Reported: April 25, 1922

This report by the Secretary of the Interior announced the completion of the construction of the public hospital in Davao during the year. The hospital building was described as “one of the modern hospitals in Mindanao,” which also features a dispensary, a nurses’ dormitory, a doctors’ quarters, and a park. The new hospital was inaugurated on 28 November 1921.¹⁴

9. Annual report of the Secretary of Public Instruction. In: Report of the Governor General of the Philippine Islands for the Period February 29, 1932 - February 16, 1933

Reported: January 25, 1933

The report of the Secretary of Public Instruction for 1932 mentioned that a private patients’ pavilion was constructed in Davao Public Hospital during that year.¹⁵

DAVAO GENERAL HOSPITAL

10. Report of the District and City Engineer of Davao City. In: Annual Report of the Mayor of Davao City (1950)

Reported: January 6, 1950

In 1950, the Mayor of Davao City reported the damages sustained by the buildings of Davao General Hospital during bombings in World War II. The report also described the structural repairs that had to be done by the US Medical Corps and the District Engineer’s Office. By this time, the reconstruction of the main building and the Nurses’ Home had been completed, while that of the Private Patients Pavilion was nearing completion. A new x-ray building had also been erected. The report also briefly mentioned the hospital expansion plans of Dr Manuel Babao, the Chief of Hospital at that time.¹⁶

DAVAO REGIONAL MEDICAL AND TRAINING CENTER

11. An Act to establish a Regional Medical and Training Center in Davao City and appropriating funds therefor, Republic Act No. 1859

Approved: June 22, 1957

This act, which was approved in 1957, mandated the establishment of Davao Regional Medical and Training Center and appropriated funds for the construction of its buildings. The planned 350-bed-capacity hospital was also intended to become the referral center that would provide special medical services to patients in Mindanao and Sulu. This act also stated that the Secretary of Health would have the control and supervision of the hospital.¹⁷

12. Memorandum to all City Officials, Chiefs of Offices and/or Departments in the City of Davao

Date issued: December 10, 1964

This memorandum from the Office of the Mayor of Davao City dated 10 December 1964 was sent to different officials and heads of government offices in Davao City to inform them about the inauguration of the Davao Regional Medical (and) Training Center on 12 December 1964. The memorandum also pointed out that the event is significant since the hospital is expected to provide specialized medical services to residents of Davao City.¹⁸

DAVAO MEDICAL CENTER

13. An Act changing the name of the Davao Regional Medical and Training Center in the City of Davao to Davao Medical Center, Batas Pambansa Bilang 319 (1982)

Approved: November 14, 1982

This is a brief legislation that, as the title suggests, mandated the renaming of Davao Regional Medical and Training Center to Davao Medical Center.¹⁹

14. Transfer of the Nervous Disease Pavillion from Davao Medical Center to the Mental Hospital and for other purposes, Ministry of Health Administrative Order No. 12 series of 1986

Approved: December 2, 1986

This issuance from the Ministry of Health ordered the transfer of the personnel, equipment

and facilities of the Nervous Diseases Pavilion (NDP) of Davao Medical Center to “the Mental Hospital.” The order was issued to consolidate “matter(s) relative to mental health” into one agency and to allow Davao Medical Center to convert the NDP into an outpatient care facility.²⁰

15. An Act increasing the bed capacity of the Davao General Hospital from three hundred fifty (350) to four hundred (400) beds, and appropriating funds therefore, Republic Act No. 7210 (1992)

Approved: March 6, 1992

This legislation authorized the increase in the bed capacity of the hospital from 350 to 400. This legislation also specified to charge the amount involved in carrying out the mandated increase in bed capacity against the country’s current and future annual General Appropriations Acts.²¹

SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES MEDICAL CENTER

16. An Act changing the name of the Davao Medical Center in Davao City to the Southern Philippines Medical Center, increasing its bed capacity from six hundred (600) to one thousand two hundred (1,200), upgrading its service facilities and professional health care, authorizing the increase of its medical personnel and appropriating funds therefor, Republic Act No. 9792 (2009)

Approved: November 19, 2009

Senate Bill No. 3135²² for Republic Act No. 9792²³ was read during the sessions of the Fourteenth Congress of the Republic of the Philippines. The bill explained that the name ‘Davao Medical Center’ connotes health care services for residents of Davao Region only. Since it was provided for in Republic Act No. 1859 that Davao Regional Medical and Training Center should be the referral center for the entire Mindanao and Sulu, “it is highly desirable that (the hospital) banners Southern Philippines in its name.”¹⁷ This senate bill also pointed out the increasing hospital occupancy rate that necessitates an increase in its bed capacity.²² In November 2009 the hospital name ‘Davao Medical Center’ was changed to Southern Philippines Medical Center through Republic Act No. 9792. The legislation also provided for the increase in the hospital’s authorized bed capacity from 600 to 1200 beds.²³ In 2016, the Secretary of Health issued a set of rules and regulations on the hospital’s services, human resources, equipment, infrastructure, systems development, and quality management to ensure the implementation of Republic Act No. 9792.²⁴

Reading the foregoing documents will reveal that, when taken all together, they do not account for all the significant events in SPMC’s history. For instance, we could not find documents that established the renaming of ‘Davao Hospital’ to ‘Davao Public Hospital (DPH),’ or the name change from ‘Davao Public Hospital’ to ‘Davao General Hospital (DGH).’ Likewise, we do not have available accounts of the events that transpired in the hospital during World War II from 1939 to 1945, or during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines from 1942 to 1945.

We know for a fact that, subsequent to the approval of Republic Act No. 1859, a new hospital building was constructed in Dumanlas Road, 3 kilometers from the site of the original hospital building in JP Laurel Avenue, Davao City. We also know that, upon completion of construction of the hospital building in Dumanlas Road, the services of DGH were transferred from the original hospital building site in JP Laurel Avenue to the new Davao Regional Medical and Training Center (DRMTC) building. However, we could not find documents that pertain to any of these events.

We can infer from Ministry of Health Administrative Order No. 12 series of 1986 above that, for some time, a Nervous Disease Pavilion in DMC functioned as the hospital’s psychiatric department prior to the transfer of its personnel, equipment and facilities to “the Mental Hospital.”²⁰ We also know that the original hospital building in JP Laurel Avenue became Davao Mental Hospital after DGH was transferred to the new building in Dumanlas Road, that Davao Mental Hospital operated independently from DGH/DRMTC for a while, and that Davao Mental Hospital eventually became—and still is—the psychiatric department of DMC/SPMC. However, we have not retrieved primary source documents that pertain to the changes in supervision and control of the hospital’s psychiatry department.

The implementing rules and regulations of RA 9792 mandated that “structural

reorganization with additional services shall be established based on the Hospital Development Plan.”²⁴ The present hospital administration, with Dr. Leopoldo J. Vega as Medical Center Chief, is working with DOH to implement this mandate. Structures in health care—buildings, facilities, equipment, programs, health care staff and their organization, and fiscal organization—are the settings and instrumentalities that enable appropriate processes and favorable outcomes of health care to happen.²⁵ At the very least, what we have above is a list of documents about the structures that have facilitated the delivery of health care services in SPMC during the last century.

We have just presented several important legislations and government documents that help describe significant events in the history of SPMC. The evolution of SPMC as a provider of hospital-based health care continues, and we have these pieces of evidence to remind us of SPMC’s remarkable past.

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