

Rotavirus Vaccine Introduction in NIP: The Philippine Experience

Lulu C Bravo

University of the Philippines Manila

The introduction of rotavirus vaccine (RV) in the national immunization program (NIP) of the Philippines has not been an easy task. There were lots of challenges to overcome and opportunities came along the way to get to where it is now. As the first country in the Asian region to include the RV in the NIP in 2012, the Philippines can provide some insights and lessons learned in this endeavor. Three main strategies are instrumental in the struggle leading to this goal. These are 1. Child Advocacy 2. A Legislative Agenda and 3. Public Private Partnership or PPP. For Child Advocacy, the Control of Diarrheal Disease (CDD) of the WHO which started in the late 80s has provided the background for the campaign to improve diarrheal morbidity and mortality in the Philippines. Other activities include Pre-service training for medical and nursing students, post graduate seminar-workshops as well as the provision of an effective communication system for prevention of diarrhea. Secondly, a legislative agenda was prepared composed of submitting position papers to policy makers in the Senate and House of Representatives to inform them on the burden of rotavirus disease and the value of RV. The passage of the law providing more vaccines in the EPI in 2011 and the passage of the “Sin Tax Law” generating more funds for health and education provided the bases for inclusion of new vaccines in the NIP. Thirdly, a partnership of various stakeholders including academe, public health workers, civil society organizations, private sectors, NGOs and media was set in place with the overriding goal of including RV in the NIP as a means of achieving MDG4 which is the reduction of infant and childhood mortality. Undoubtedly, there will be different strategies appropriate and workable for different countries in Asia and the world but the idea of sharing experiences and outcomes among these countries can provide the much needed motivation and potential positive outcomes.