

## Paul Christian P. Pacquing, MD (1986-2024)

Michael Ryan A. Abuan, MD

It is an honor to write this tribute to Dr. Paul Christian Pacquing, though I never imagined doing this for him. Given this opportunity to pay my last respects to a dear friend and colleague, I will try my best to recount and share the last 11 years of his life with you.

Pax played a myriad of roles. He was a husband, a father, a son, a friend and a physician. Whichever role he played; he was exemplary at it.

I first met Pax during pre-residency for the ORL-HNS program at the East Avenue Medical Center. He was cordial to everyone, even to his fellow pre-residents, despite us being competitors.

During residency, he stood out as Mr. Congeniality. He had an immensely infectious smile, and was literally friends with everyone in the hospital. He always had an amicable demeanor towards his patients. He would call patients like, "Mommy dear! Kumusta ka na?" Sometimes, proceeding to innocently and warmly hug our patients.

He had a knack for handling conflicts and toxicities with his laid-back nature. He would utter: "Chill. Relax lang tayo pare." Surprisingly, this worked and we would surmount our challenges unscathed most of the time.

We had our sleep medicine and surgery fellowship training together in the same year at Chang Gung Medical Center. He excelled even in a foreign land and training institution. As a Fellow, he was sharp, studious and valued the time and experience there. Our mentors acknowledged his brilliance and he finished training with much approval.

Back home, he established his practice in Isabela, Cagayan and Manila. However, due to the limited mobility brought about by the pandemic, he opted to stay in his hometown of Isabela and share his medical expertise there.

As a physician, he was charitable and compassionate. Sharing a clinic together, our secretary would frequently tell me the incidents where Pax would treat financially-constrained patients for free. He would incessantly discuss his dream of establishing and providing sleep disorder services in the North to cater to his fellow Ilocanos.



As a family man, he was affectionate, responsible and thoughtful. He loved his wife and was committed, despite numerous challenges. Our chats never ended without him talking about his daughter, the time they spent together and the dreams he had for her. Even during his last days, he only thought of his daughter and that he was determined to fight on so that he could see her grow up.

As the provider of the family, he was hard-working, tireless and passionate. He chose to live a simple life, but made sure his family lived comfortably.

In March 2023, after attending our annual PSSM convention, he was diagnosed with a rare type of B-lymphoblastic leukemia. This was extremely difficult and sad news to process by everyone close to Pax. How could a fit, sporty and healthy young man have leukemia?

He underwent numerous grueling sessions of chemotherapy, but despite this, in a typical Pax manner of managing things, he remained calm, positive and relaxed. Never was there a negative word during the entirety of his treatment. Even in pictures where he was bedridden and attached to IV lines, he was still smiling.

On the morning of September 4, 2024, the day prior to the first phase of his bone marrow transplant treatment, he asked for prayers and told me the next time I see him will be during recovery. Four days after, I received news from his wife that he was in critical condition with signs of multiple organ failure. Even prior to intubation, he was seen smiling and waving to his wife and brother and gesturing a thumbs up. Only a brave man would be capable of doing this while feeling the inevitable end nearing. Pax joined our Creator the following day.

Paul Christian's early passing remains a mystery and nagging question to family and friends. Why was this energetic, young and vibrant soul extinguished so early? Perhaps God has a plan. As mere humans, maybe we are not supposed to know the answers to the whys and whens of life and existence.

To Pax: "Paalam, kapatid." We will miss you.

I know you are smiling down at us from the heavens.