



FROM THE EDITOR

We're back to a pandemic theme for this Spring issue. Unfortunately, covid-19 is still a major threat despite the vaccines, and we are and will still feel its far-reaching effects for the foreseeable future. As a reminder, we must continue to watch out for our health and wellness within and even beyond covid-19. Now is not the time to let down our guard, so please continue to follow recommended health and safety protocols by the appropriate authorities.

For this edition, we are reprinting two articles that two of our members contributed to Manila Mail's March 2021 issue that was recently published. One is an article by Dr. Joel Ang that he graciously wrote on behalf of PACC-DC for our "Mind Your Business" column. Dr. Ang's article tackles frequently asked questions about the covid-19 vaccines.

The other article is by yours truly on stress, anxiety, depression and suicide, which, even pre-pandemic, was already on the rise and it would seem, more so now.

We also asked our members to give some insights on what 2020 was like for them. Thank you for sending in your contributions.

Happy Spring!

Olma Inocentes

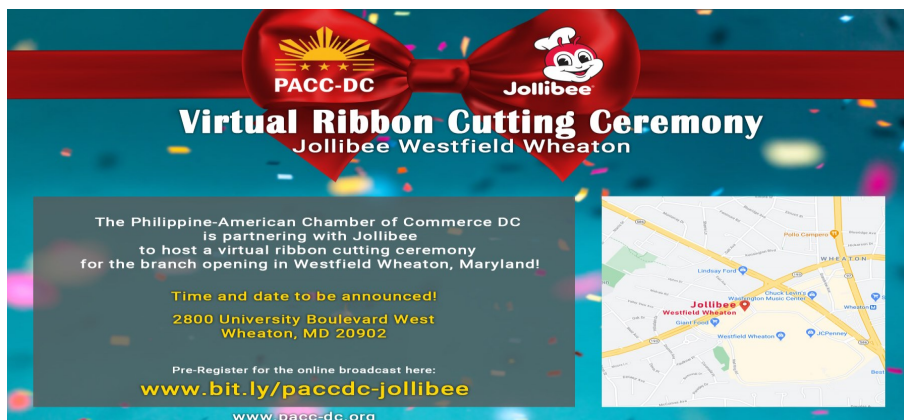
"The earth laughs in flowers."
- Ralph Waldo Emerson

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- **Tax Planning: A Road to Savings** (in Partnership with J&C Financial Services and National ACE)
March 18 – 4:00 pm EDT
Zoom
- **PACC-DC April Fools' Meet & Greet**
Special Event TBA
- **Save the Dates**
April 29—4:00 pm EDT
Real Estate Webinar
May 13—*May Meet & Greet*
May 28—*Financial Literacy*
(with POLO-WDC)
June 10—*June Meet & Greet*
June 24—*Health & Wellness*



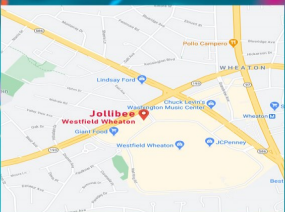
Virtual Ribbon Cutting Ceremony
Jollibee Westfield Wheaton

The Philippine-American Chamber of Commerce DC is partnering with Jollibee to host a virtual ribbon cutting ceremony for the branch opening in Westfield Wheaton, Maryland!

Time and date to be announced!
2800 University Boulevard West
Wheaton, MD 20902

Pre-Register for the online broadcast here:
www.bit.ly/paccdc-jollibee

www.pacc-dc.org



COVID-19 VACCINE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

BY JOEL ANG, MD FAAFP AAHIVM

With the advent of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID19 mRNA vaccines and soon others, we see the beginnings of a light at the end of a very long tunnel in this pandemic. This is symbolic of the beginning of the end of this deadly global disaster that has infected almost 112 million and killed about 2.5 million around the world, 28.2 million cases and over 502,000 deaths in the United States; 564,865 infected and 12,107 deaths in the Philippines.

As a practicing family physician in private practice in Washington DC, I would like to answer questions that I encounter on a daily basis from my patients. Seeing patients on a daily basis throughout the pandemic and as family medicine physician with expertise in another viral epidemic of HIV, I firmly believe that the vaccines will be the way out of this current pandemic.

Public attitudes about the new vaccines vary by demographics, with recent polling showing that men and older adults are more likely to choose vaccination, and women and people of color showing more wariness. Harmful myths circulate around the internet and social media which needs to be addressed and corrected before more are infected and killed. Our obligation to ourselves and to our fellow men are to share facts and news to counter fake news and falsehoods.

Although the reasons for reluctance may vary, questions from patients will likely be similar. Some are related to the “warp speed” language. Other concerns arise from the fact that the platform -mRNA- has not been used in human vaccines before.

Q: Were these vaccines made too quickly?

People have been working on this platform for 30 years, so it is not brand new. Researchers began working on mRNA vaccines in the 1990s. Technological developments in the last decade have meant that their use has become feasible. and they have been tested in animals against many viral diseases. The mRNA vaccines are attractive because they are expected to be safe and easily manufactured from common materials. That is what we have seen with the COVID19 pandemic. Design of the spike protein mRNA component began as soon as the viral genome became available in January.

Usually, rolling out vaccine takes years, so less than a year under the program called Operation Warp Speed can seem like moving too fast. The name has given people the impression that, by going at warp speed, the manufacturers were cutting corners, but the reality is that Operation Warp Speed is mostly for manufacturing and distribution.

What underlies the speed is a restructuring of the normal vaccine development process. The same phases of development- animal testing, a small initial human phase, a second for safety testing, a third large phase for efficacy- were all conducted as for any vaccine. But in this case, some phases were completed in parallel instead of sequentially.

Two other factors contributed to the speed. First, gearing up production can be a slow roll out, but with these vaccines, companies ramped up production even before anyone knew if the vaccines would work - the “warp speed” part. The second factor has been the large number of cases, making exposures more likely and thus accelerating the results of the efficacy trials. There is so much transmission everywhere in the United States that it did not take long to hit the threshold of events to read out phase 3.



Q: This vaccine has never been used in humans. How do we know it's safe?

The Pfizer phase 3 trial included more than 43,000 people, and Moderna had more than 30,000. The first humans received mRNA-based COVID19 vaccines March 2020. The most common adverse effects emerge right after a vaccination. As with any vaccine that gains approval, monitoring will continue.

UK health officials have reported that two health care workers vaccinated in the initial rollout of the Pfizer vaccine had what seems to have been a severe allergic response. Both recipients had a history of anaphylactic allergic responses and carried EpiPens, and both recovered. During the clinical trial, allergic reaction rates were 0.63% in the vaccine group and 0.51% in the placebo group.

As a result of the two reactions, UK regulators are now recommending that patients with a history of severe allergies not receive the vaccine at the current time.



Q: What are the likely side effects?

So far, the most common side effects are pain at the injection site and an achy, flu-like feeling. More severe reactions have been reported but were not common in the trials. The common side effects are a good sign signaling that the recipient is generating a robust immune response. I received the vaccine mid-December, the Pfizer vaccine, and had a sore arm after the first injection and a sore arm and an enlarged lymph node after the second shot which was made better with ibuprofen. I have strongly recommended the vaccine to my own family members.

Q: I already had COVID19 or had a positive antibody test. Do I still need to get the vaccine?

There are too many unknowns to say if a history of COVID19 would make a difference. We don't know how long neutralizing antibodies last after infection. In my clinical experience, antibody responses last as few as 3 months to a maximum of 8 to 9 months; however, after that, protective antibodies disappear. What we do know is that the vaccine tends to produce antibody titers toward the higher end of the spectrum. This suggests a better immunity with vaccination than after natural infection.

Q: Can patients of color feel safe getting the vaccine?

People of color might be understandably reluctant to take a vaccine that was developed in a way that appears to be faster. Thus far there are no safety signals that differ by race or ethnicity. In its Phase 3 trial, the Pfizer vaccine was 100% effective for Black study participants, 94.5% effective in Latino participants, slightly below the 94.7% effectiveness for white subjects. In addition, it was 74.4 % effective in Asian Americans, and 100% effective in Native Americans and Pacific Islanders. The Moderna vaccine was 100% effective in Black, Latino, Asian Americans as well as in people with mixed racial backgrounds. The Pfizer phase 3 enrolled just over 9% Black participants, 0.5% Native American, 2.3% multiracial participants, and 28% Hispanic, Latinx. Moderna said that approximately 37% of participants of its phase 3 trial come from communities of color.

Overall, I feel safe recommending either vaccine for Asian Americans due to high efficacy and particularly because of the concern that those disproportionately affected and who passed away from COVID19 have been Filipino Americans. In California, Filipino Americans constitute about 25% of the state's Asian population, yet they represent at least 35% of coronavirus deaths in that group.

Q: What about children and pregnant women?

Although the trials included participants from many different age groups and backgrounds, children and pregnant or lactating women were not among them. Pfizer gained approval in last October to include participants as young as age 12 years, and Moderna plans a pediatric inclusion, pending approval. The CDC advised that pregnant and lactating women should be offered the vaccine and may choose to be vaccinated. This view is shared by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine. There is no theoretical reason why mRNA vaccines would be harmful to the mother during pregnancy, to the developing fetus, or to a breastfeeding infant.

Pregnant women should be informed that observational studies show that pregnancy is a risk factor for severe illness due to COVID19, much as it is for influenza. On the basis of this information and the likelihood they have of COVID19 exposure, along with information about the limited safety data available to date, pregnant women can make an educated decision about whether to accept the vaccine. The Pfizer vaccine is authorized for patients ≥ 16 years and the Moderna vaccine for ≥ 18 years. Studies in children are planned, but neither vaccine should be administered to children at this point. There is no maximum age restriction.

Q: Can I stop taking precautions like wearing a mask and social distancing after I get the vaccine?

No. Everyone should continue to take the COVID19 precautions until the public health officials instruct otherwise. One of the main reasons for this is that the vaccines have been demonstrated to be effective at preventing symptomatic COVID19 illness, but it is not yet proven to prevent asymptomatic infection.

Q: Can I spread COVID19 to others after getting the vaccine?

People who get the vaccine will not be able to spread the virus as a result of getting the vaccine, as it does not introduce the virus to your body. It is possible however that someone who has had the vaccine may be able to get infected without knowing it and spread the virus to other people.

About the author:

Dr Joel Ang was born in Manila Philippines and is in private practice in Dupont Circle in Washington DC. He is Board Certified in Family Medicine and HIV Medicine. His medical interests include Family Medicine, HIV medicine, LGBT medicine and Diabetes management. He has been awarded a Top Doctor in the Washingtonian magazine from 2016-2020. He speaks English, Spanish, Tagalog, and Hokkien Chinese. He is an accomplished violinist and currently is a first violinist with the World Doctors Orchestra, where he performs for charity worldwide. www.qstreetmds.com

MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS: A LOOK BACK AT THE YEAR THAT WAS

BY PACC-DC MEMBERS

Marielle Kabin, PACC-DC Secretary
Travelwise International | Fort Washington, MD

The 2020 pandemic was a whirlwind of emotions. It started off prosperous from a travel & tourism perspective and then quickly tanked with the outbreak of COVID-19 globally. As the world made its transition into working in the virtual space of contactless solutions, I spent my quarantine days enjoying the simple joys of being a new mother. The saying is true, that “the days are lonely, the nights are long, but the years are short” when you have a little one. For many businesswomen in America, the typical maternity leave averages around 3 months before returning to the workforce again. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to spend over a year with my firstborn son and be present for all his development milestones. From his first word to his first steps, he worked while I worked and together, we achieved personal growth. He learned new skills while mommy completed her Certified Travel Advisor Certificate (CTA) and while launching a Facebook live series dedicated to travel updates to the Philippines. Quarantine allowed me to master the art of time management, cooking kid-friendly meals and being able to make up nursery rhymes about anything and everything.



Survival Through Optimism & Camaraderie
By Rodney Salinas, PACC-DC VP Membership
Mobile: (202) 905-4215 | Email: mail@rodneysalinas.org

The last year during this pandemic has been rough on all of us. But I've managed to survive through a healthy dose of optimism coupled with camaraderie in a small bubble of friends and colleagues. While I worked from my home office on most days, I occasionally frequented the office for random meetings here and there (only to spend most of the time in a tiny "office" the size of an old-school phone booth).



I would say that my technical proficiency in Zoom has increased, but so has the weight that shows on my bathroom scale. But through it all, I managed to survive it all mostly because I have an amazing network of family and friends and PACC colleagues. But like the rest of you, I'm eager to give this COVID-19 pandemic the boot (see pic) and move on with my life and business. In the meantime, I'll keep my mask on just in case!

Cristina Sison, PACC-DC President
Sison Group, LLC | Real estate Consultant, Investor, Entrepreneur | Arlington, VA

The pandemic of 2020 has certainly pivoted the way we do business in every aspect. With me being a social creature, the isolation affected me mentally. Speaking for myself, I need to change my mindset and overcome the fear of the virus and live my life practicing safe protocols but on my own terms. I respect every person's opinion, but I quickly realized that for me, life has to go on and move forward.



Since I am high risk, I could not really meet clients face to face or show properties as frequently as before. I had to do things differently through zoom meetings and scheduled open houses that I send my clients to. As for the listings, we have developed a safe system of showing homes through virtual walkthrough or 30-minute intervals of showings with PPE.

It seems that working from home proved to be busier for me since I find myself facing the computer most of the time. My mindset is to expand my business in different areas of real estate not only in the residential field but also in the commercial field. This pandemic has allowed me to stand back and reflect and do the basic things I should have been doing in the first place, to set a good foundation for growth. It allowed myself to sit back and create more business opportunities and do the things that can excite and motivate me.

It was also tough for my daughter, Savi, since she has to stay glued to a computer for at least 5 hours a day for her schooling. There are a lot of distractions working from home, but it definitely made you closer to, at least, your basic family. You tend to cook more, so tendency is to gain more weight. I also got addicted to watching Korean dramas that put a smile to my face.

You tend to see your community in zoom, but it is not the same. The social human interaction, that sense of belonging is more important than ever. But again, It is all about the mindset of being positive onward and upward. By creating a generosity mindset, I feel blessed to be part of a wonderful organization like PACC-DC, more so because the members have become such good friends and colleagues. In this time of crisis, you will know who you can turn to for help and I want to be able to help if I can.

Creating Memories

By Jon Melegrito | Kensington, MD

Elvie, my wife of more than 50 years, and I were tempted to join my daughter, Desiree, and her two girls, Maya (13) and Delilah (9) who are spending their Spring Break in Orlando, Fl. “It’ll be nice to get away and spend a few days with your grandkids,” she said, “and create more memories.”

Of course, we’d like nothing better. At our age (we are in our late 70s and early 80s), we don’t have many chances for more adventures with the kids. Every time they visit, Maya and Delilah always come up with something to get their Lolo and Lola entertained, like doing dance moves on TikTok or jamming with our ukuleles.

Two years ago, the five of us did a 10-day tour of the UK to celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary. And before that, a 5-day outing to the Grand Tetons, a week in Disney World and, on a cold February weekend, a trip to Saratoga, NY for a dance festival.

This time, we decided not to fly with them to Orlando. Although we got our first dose of Moderna in mid-February, we didn’t feel safe enough yet to hop in a plane.

We miss being with Maya and Delilah during the pandemic. Except for a few days last Christmas, when they insisted on driving from New Jersey, our visits have largely been on zoom. We miss sharing meals together around the dinner table, where the conversation – often led by the more talkative Delilah – always prompts pleasant surprises or awkward revelations. Indeed, they know so much more than we’ll ever know.

Being retirees for nearly 10 years now, sheltering in place this past year wasn’t as much a disruption as a digression. With no public events to go, I tried sorting and organizing boxes of photographs taken over the years. Looking at those pictures

Maria Sison-Wright

Inner Core Wellness | Vienna, VA

It has been exactly a year to this day March 14 when I realized that things will never be the same. I was teaching a workshop in Australia when it was announced that New Zealand announced a 14-day quarantine, and I was scheduled to return to the US the next day. The airport was packed, and it was such a very eerie feeling flying back home. Mostly a fear of the unknown. I spent the next 10 days in quarantine and my PILATES studio was mandated to shut down soon after.

I immediately went into a solution driven mindset and applied for financial assistance from SBA to keep my business afloat. I started doing virtual teaching and classes which was a pain in the neck literally and figuratively as my older clients were not used to this teaching medium. Things went smoothly afterwards, and I have never been busier teaching. I re-opened my studio in June 2020. I organized a few secluded retreats with my girlfriends (in my bubble) to get recharged.

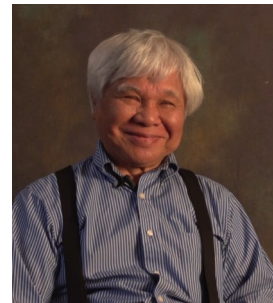
The silver lining in this whole pandemic is that I spent more time with my husband Cliff and dog Toby. I was able to connect with PILATES teachers around the world and continued to teach virtual workshops globally. I worked out regularly and got stronger and healthier than I was a year ago. I have been vaccinated and I look forward to some normalcy in the future.

Kristoff Inocentes

KAJI Design Studio | Falls Church, VA

This past year has further proven the importance of the internet to humanity. With it, even during a pandemic, people can connect and communicate from anywhere in the world, whether via text, audio, video, or even a combination of all three. Not only that, they can share ideas, learn new skills, and showcase their talents and projects with a simple click of a button, all from the comfort of their own home. The internet is essentially an ever-evolving and growing repository of human knowledge, where every possible topic under the sun can be discussed, dissected, and learned, giving everyone with an internet connection unprecedented access to information and opportunities that would have once been restricted by geography, social class, or even career path.

Want to learn how to play guitar? What about the intricacies of quantum physics? Or perhaps cooking delicious foods? Designing and engineering buildings? All of this can now be learned to varying degrees of proficiency online. Perhaps more importantly, all of these things can be accessed for free or for very cheap, which was why I took full advantage of that and learned a lot of new skills. You should too!



YOU ARE NOT ALONE

BY OLMA INOCENTES



Suicide is one of the leading causes of death in the United States and is a major public health concern. The suicide rate has been on the rise in the past years with a 35% increase from 1999 to 2018. Nationwide numbers on suicide deaths in 2020 are not available yet, nor is there any clear link to the pandemic but there is growing concern among healthcare professionals faced with rising numbers of suicides and failed attempts, especially among the youth, in the past few months - whether it was directly attributable or related to the pandemic or made worse by pandemic-related delays in care.

There are no clear indicators pointing to a single cause for suicide. It is complex, involving different layers of factors, including biological and environmental ones. Most often, the cause appears to be a convergence and progression of conditions, like anxiety, depression and substance problems, leading to a state of hopelessness and despair.

Families left behind often say they did not see it coming but simple things we take for granted, like day-to-day stress, something easily overlooked, could have been a factor. This is because everyone experiences stress from time to time, maybe due to pressures of school, work, family and lately, social media. Stress can be managed, and it's not all bad,

especially in dangerous situations where stress prepares the body for a fight or flight response; but long-term stress may contribute to serious health problems, including mental disorders such as depression or anxiety, which can then spiral into suicide.

Depression is a common but serious mood disorder, which causes severe symptoms affecting how a person feels, thinks and handle normal daily activities. Anxiety is "normal" and even expected when dealing with, for example, a family issue or making important decisions. When the anxiety turns into something long-term or even become worse, it has progressed into a disorder, which can then interfere with daily activities. These conditions, especially if not addressed, increase the risk of suicide.

There are treatments and therapies available for people experiencing stress, anxiety, depression, trauma and those with suicidal thoughts. One breakthrough method that works directly with the brain is the Brain Stimulated Wellness Neurokinesis Intervention System (System). The System is a precise combination of six proprietary techniques designed to eliminate stress, anxiety, depression, confusion, fears and symptoms of trauma, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Unlike traditional therapy, which may take years for any results to manifest, this brain to body to brain communication encourages faster and immediate, but lasting, results.

The key to the positive results is in training the brain how to Respond instead of Reacting and the System is focused on teaching the brain how to efficiently respond to the "need" in the moment. The System rapidly acts on the neurons and neuroglia to actually change the brain to the Now, instead of relying on past reactions that no longer help ensure thrival along with survival.

First used to act on suicide and homicide prevention, the techniques are now widely and easily used on a daily basis to train the brain to respond to everyday stressors, anxiety, frustration, depression, fears, pain and illness, and trauma-inducing events like natural disasters, physical injuries, accidents, war, assault, violence, terrorism and social issues such as bullying.

The method is unique in that it does not require clients to disclose any diagnosis or personal details, so you could even decide not to give your real name and use a pseudonym. More importantly, it does not require the use of medications nor interfere with current medications. Clients learn to use these techniques as and when needed, helping them to begin the journey back to being the best version of themselves.

For more information on the System, please contact The OMLLI Group, LLC, info@omlligroup.com.

5 Action Steps for Helping Someone in Emotional Pain

- ASK**
"Are you thinking about killing yourself?"
- KEEP THEM SAFE**
Reduce access to lethal items or places.
- BE THERE**
Listen carefully and acknowledge their feelings.
- HELP THEM CONNECT**
Save the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline number 1-800-273-8255.
- STAY CONNECTED**
Follow up and stay in touch after a crisis.

NIH National Institute of Mental Health
www.nimh.nih.gov/suicideprevention



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PACC-DC

Our Vision

To expand and strengthen Filipino-American entrepreneurship and business development activities in the greater Washington, D.C. area, and to become a meaningful force in the growth and development of communities within the region.

Our Mission

To develop programs, seminars, and events that have a positive impact on the business community; to connect and foster open and consistent communications across communities; to support and augment all our members; and to foster community outreach initiatives that benefit the entire region.

Philippine-American Chamber of
Commerce of Metropolitan
Washington D.C.

1629 K Street NW #300
Washington, D.C. 20006

Phone: 202 - 813 - 0224

E-mail:
philippineamericanchamberdc
@gmail.com

Facebook
@paccdc

Instagram
@paccdc



MEMBERSHIP

Membership Benefits

Business Development Connections

- Calendar of events & meetings offering networking and business development opportunities
- Priority registration and discounted event ticket pricing for members
- Sponsorship opportunities at networking events as well as e-newsletter, social media, and website
- Listing in and access to PACC-DC business directory and members-only resources
- Post job and partnership opportunities on the PACC-DC website
- Creating collaboration and business opportunities with fellow members
- Connections to local businesses, other Chambers of Commerce, and to SBA and Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) as well as other business organizations

Learning & Support

- Access to recognized industry experts, speakers, and thought leaders
- Mentorship opportunities with key business leaders
- Webinars on topics of interest

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS!

Member Name	Business
Agnes and Sharon Del Rosario	La Fleur Enchantée, Inc.
Philip Ortiz	Aflac Insurance
Clement Tagle III	Surf City College Planning
Princess Tuazon	Glam by Princess
Marc Neri	Sikich LLP
Joey Pacariem	Makati Express Cargo
Mark Arevalo	FYP-DC
Jerry and Iris Lustan	Barkada Clothing
Eliot Cashell	KJL Accounting
Anita Galang-Mason	Anita Mason, LLC
John Victoria	Polianna
Noreen Miyake-Char	The Monitor Group, LLC
Michael Reyes	Bank of America Merrill Lynch
Randolph and Sarah Sta. Ana	The Marigold Bus and Booth / Santa Ana Photography
Randolph Lizardo	Capital Women's Care
Tess Rollins	Simply Enhance
Toby Bantug	Toby's Homemade Ice Cream & Coffee
Louie Ling	24 Hour Limousine and Sedan Service LLC / Worldwide Express LLC
Gerry Berdan	Berdan Realty, LLC
Rose Aquino-Valeriano	Mariposa Global Journeys
Voltaire Trinidad	DatalabUSA
Joy Hendrickson	Capstar Commercial Realty