

# Enhance patient journey with HCPN e-referral through STAHR initiative: A collaboration among Rizal Medical Center, Thinking Machines Data Science and Novartis Philippines

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- *STAHR, Strengthening Technology-Use for Improved Access to Health and Referral, helps improve patient outcomes by increasing the number of referrals processed and accepted, enhancing referral response rate, and expediting referrals. Novartis aims to strengthen the Philippine patient referral system with the subsequent adoption of STAHR in all apex hospitals in the country.*

In support of the Universal Health Care (UHC) Act and to enhance the patient journey in the country, Novartis Healthcare Philippines has partnered with the Rizal Medical Center (RMC) and Thinking Machines Data Science, Inc. to launch STAHR, a web-based electronic referral solution for hospitals that supports the implementation of Health Care Provider Networks (HCPNs).

The UHC Act promotes primary healthcare through the reorganization of providers into HCPNs. An HCPN is a group of primary to tertiary care providers, whether public or private, offering people-centered and comprehensive care in an integrated and coordinated manner. A referral system is prerequisite to provide quality healthcare in a timely manner, especially in a highly fragmented health system.

STAHR is a unique AI-based solution that integrates facility, service, and human resource database of various health facilities to enable an effective and efficient referral system. It features a dashboard that summarizes available beds, doctors, equipment, and diagnostic tests to the receiving facility. Physicians can securely add and organize health information in a patient profile (eg, Symptom, Objective, Assessment, Plan, lab test results, etc.) and conduct clinical discussions within the platform.

STAHR helps improve patient outcomes by increasing the number of referrals processed and accepted, enhancing referral response rate, and expediting referrals. From its initial deployment since September 2023, there has been an improvement in the efficiency of at least 88% in the response time, from more than 24 to 3 hours. Novartis aims to support the strengthen the Philippine patient referral system with the subsequent adoption of STAHR in all apex hospitals in the country.

“Globally, Novartis strives for a triple win for patients, health care professionals, and health care systems. Our Global Novartis Access principles focus on affordability, research and development, and health systems strengthening. The STAHR initiative is our commitment to contribute to the Philippine health care system,” said Mr. Joel Chong, Country President, Novartis Healthcare Philippines.

“STAHR will enhance the efficiency of our service delivery network. This e-referral system will be a key

enabler in navigating patients to the right facilities with appropriate levels of care. By investing in technology to help professionals improve referral, we will create a big impact in delivering quality healthcare to our patients,” said Dr. Rica Lumague, Medical Center Chief II, Rizal Medical Center.

“Before the development of STAHR, we have done referral through calls and text messaging between and among facilities. Because of this initiative, we were able to develop a referral process built into an IT solution. This will establish accountability and that performance can be better managed. We invite everyone to be part of STAHR,” said Dr. Jojo Rivera, Chairperson of the Dermatology Department and Head of the Service Delivery Network, Rizal Medical Center.

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