

# Novartis partners with specialists, patient group in celebrating World Ankylosing Spondylitis Day

May 07, 2019

- Novartis Healthcare Philippines in partnership with the Philippine Rheumatology Association (PRA) and patient group Ankylosing Spondylitis Association of the Philippines (ASAP) held several activities to celebrate World Ankylosing Spondylitis (WAS) Day 2019.
- Organized annually on May 4 by the Ankylosing Spondylitis International Federation (ASIF), WAS Day aims to connect AS patients with each other and promote awareness on the condition. This year's WAS Day theme is "Walk As One".
- To celebrate WAS Day 2019, a lay forum on AS entitled "Move As One Versus Back Attack" was held on May 5, 2019 in Pasay City.

**Quezon City, May 7, 2019** – Novartis Healthcare Philippines in partnership with the Philippine Rheumatology Association (PRA) and patient group Ankylosing Spondylitis Association of the Philippines (ASAP) held two activities to celebrate World Ankylosing Spondylitis (WAS) Day 2019.

Also known as "back attack", ankylosing spondylitis (AS) is a type of arthritis that affects the spine. Symptoms include pain and stiffness from the neck down to the lower back. AS causes the spine's bones (vertebrae) to fuse together, resulting in a rigid spine. These changes may be mild or severe, and may lead to a stooped-over posture. Early diagnosis and treatment helps control pain and stiffness and may reduce or prevent significant deformity. Although it can occur at any age, spondylitis most often strikes men in their teens and 20s. It is less common and generally milder in women.<sup>1</sup>

"Early diagnosis and treatment of AS helps control pain and stiffness and may reduce or prevent significant deformity. Although people with AS often find walking difficult, it is essential to take part in gentle walks each day to relieve the stiffness," explained Dr. Evan Glenn Vista, PRA Board Member.

"AS is a debilitating condition that affects men and women in their most productive years. It negatively impacts the quality of life of patients and puts a heavy socio-economic burden on their family. We need to work together to empower patients and caregivers with information and social support," said ASAP President Mr. Clark Ferrer.

"We are privileged to partner with the PRA and ASAP in increasing awareness on AS in order to promote early diagnosis and optimal management," said Ms. Cheryl Maley, President and Managing Director, Novartis Healthcare Philippines.

Representatives of the three partner stakeholders spoke during a media briefing held on May 7, 2019 at the Luxent Hotel in Quezon City. Organized annually on May 4 by the Ankylosing Spondylitis International Federation (ASIF), WAS Day aims to connect AS patients with each other and promote awareness on the condition.<sup>2</sup> This year's WAS Day theme is "Walk As One".

To celebrate World AS Day 2019, Novartis Healthcare Philippines, PRA and ASAP co-organized a half-day lay

forum on AS entitled “Move As One Versus Back Attack” on May 5, 2019 at the Microtel Inn & Suites – Mall of Asia in Pasay City; and a Media Briefing on May 07, 2019 at Luxent Hotel, Quezon City.



To celebrate World AS Day 2019, Novartis Healthcare Philippines, PRA and ASAP co-organized a half-day lay forum on AS entitled “Move As One Versus Back Attack” on May 5, 2019 at the Microtel Inn & Suites – Mall of Asia in Pasay City; and a Media Briefing on May 07, 2019 at Luxent Hotel, Quezon City.



Novartis Healthcare Philippines in partnership with the Philippine Rheumatology Association (PRA) and patient group Ankylosing Spondylitis Association of the Philippines (ASAP) held two activities to celebrate World Ankylosing Spondylitis Day 2019. Photo shows from left: Dr. Cyril Tolosa, Medical Franchise Head, Novartis; Dr. Evan Glenn Vista, Board Member, Philippine Rheumatology

Association (PRA); Mr. Clark Ferrer, President, Ankylosing Spondylitis Association of the Philippines ; Ms. Emma Iriman, care giver and wife of AS patient; Dr. Geraldine Zamora, Patient Advocacy committee, PRA; and Dr. Albert Pamplona, Sales and Marketing Manager, Novartis.

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## References

- <https://www.webmd.com/back-pain/guide/ankylosing-spondylitis#1>
- <https://www.awarenessdays.com/awareness-days-calendar/world-ankylosing-spondylitis-day-2019/>

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