

Why Newborn Screening is Important



By: Jonathan M. Yao

ACCORDING to the Department of Health (DOH), only 15.6 percent or 234,000 babies have undergone Newborn Screening procedures in 2007. Sad to say, in spite of the information campaign conducted by the DOH and health workers in the country, there are still some hospitals and birthing institutions that have not made Newborn Screening mandatory.

In a recent episode of “PhilHealth Hataw sa Serbisyo”, over Radio DWIZ 882 KHz-AM, Dr. Rey B. Aquino, President and CEO of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) discussed the process of Newborn Screening or NBS and how it can protect babies from preventable metabolic conditions that may cause disability or death.

Newborn Screening, according to Aquino, is a process where blood samples are taken from new born babies and placed on a filter card.

After four hours, it will be forwarded to the Newborn Screening laboratory for testing.

Aquino stressed that congenital hypothyroidism, congenital adrenal hyperplasia, galactosemia, phenylketonuria, glucose 6-phosphate dehydrogenase deficiency and homocystinuria are the six different metabolic conditions that a child may inherit from the genes of one or both of his biological parents. He said that if the newborn baby is found positive for metabolic conditions, healthcare practitioners will institute measures to prevent mental retardation or death.

Fortunately, PhilHealth members may avail themselves of the Newborn Care Package worth P1,000.00 that includes newborn screening for their newborn babies. The package also includes administration of the first dose of Hepatitis B immunization, eye prophylaxis, umbilical cord care, Vitamin K, thermal care, administration of BCG vaccine and resuscitation.

Aquino also reminded members to ensure that the hospital and physicians are PhilHealth-accredited, and that the member’s premium contributions are also updated to ensure hassle-free availment of benefits.

PhilHealth Hataw sa Serbisyo airs every Friday, 10:00 – 10:30 a.m. over Radio DWIZ 882 KHz-AM. It is hosted by PhilHealth President and CEO Dr. Rey B. Aquino and is co-hosted by DWIZ News Director Ely Aligora and seasoned anchor Marou Pahati-Sarne. It can also be heard LIVE through www.dwiz882.com.

