

## **Better access to pain relief becoming a reality in the Philippines**

During an international opioid availability workshop for the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia in April 2008, Philippine Health Secretary Francisco Duque III pledged 10 million pesos (approximately USD 231,000) to buy morphine sulfate tablets for indigent patients and make these available in government hospitals for his country. On February 4, 2009, coinciding with the observance of World Cancer Day, the Department of Health turned over the promised morphine tablets during a press conference at the East Avenue Medical Center in Quezon City, Philippines. The morphine sulfate tablets will be distributed for free in select government hospitals and private hospices that care for cancer patients in chronic pain.

This project is a joint collaboration between the Philippine Department of Health, the World Health Organization, the Pain Society of the Philippines, the Philippine Cancer Society, the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, and several non-governmental organizations.

This action reflects significant efforts made by the Philippine government to improve the availability of pain relieving medications for cancer patients who suffer, and is a welcome development during this “Global Year Against Cancer Pain” as recognized by the International Association for the Study of Pain.

The event was covered by several Philippine media outlets. Articles and photos of the event can be found at <http://www.painpolicy.wisc.edu/internat/WPRO/Philippines/index.htm>.