

FOREWORD



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Since the Department of Clinical Epidemiology was reorganized in AY 2007-2008 under Dean Ma. Graciela Garayblas-Gonzaga, a progressive undergraduate course was developed. Its dynamic curriculum has evolved from competency-based to outcomes-based, now aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Philippine Development Plan (PDP). This course guides students through comprehensive research activities, from protocol development and critical appraisal to manuscript writing, with the ultimate goal of publishing their work.

Research is a key strategic goal for the University of Santo Tomas and the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery. While succeeding Deans Jesus Valencia and Maria Lourdes Maglinao established systems that have resulted in hundreds of completed student research papers since 2011, the challenge of increasing publication volume persisted.

Starting in AY 2017-2018, under Dr. Maglinao's guidance, the Department of Clinical Epidemiology received the mandate to improve student-led publications. Strategies instituted included establishing the O.R.D.E.R. database for monitoring, fostering streamlined student-faculty collaboration facilitated by our research coordinator Dr. Elizabeth Mercado, and holding the Annual Research Poster Presentation. The most significant strategy is a close partnership with the JMUST editorial team led by Dr. Raymond Rosales and Dr. Leilani B. Asis and the Research Center for Health Sciences chaired by Dr. Warren Bacorro, to launch the first-ever special issue of JMUST dedicated solely to medical student research output.

After a year's effort, we present this special issue of the Journal of Medicine, University of Santo Tomas (JMUST)—a clear testament to the dynamic and growing research culture at the Faculty of Medicine and

Surgery. We are proud of our students for transforming local questions into noteworthy scholarly contributions. This achievement was made possible by the unwavering support, guidance, and expertise of the faculty mentors, peer reviewers, and Editorial Board.

We invite all members of the UST Faculty of Medicine and Surgery community—students, faculty, and administrators—to engage fully with the innovative research found in this inaugural issue. We hope that JMUST inspires more students to embrace the challenges and rewards of scientific discovery, cementing its place as an essential catalyst for academic excellence within our institution for years to come.