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# Enhancement of Virtues: Key to a Healthy Lifestyle against Chronic Diseases and Future Health Crisis

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## To the editor,

In a recent article published in this journal, the author emphasized that the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic continues to have a massive impact on human health, causing sudden lifestyle changes through quarantine measures such as lockdowns, social distancing, various curfews, and isolation at home.<sup>1)</sup> This might increase the risk of developing numerous chronic diseases, such as diabetes mellitus, obesity, and cardiovascular diseases. Evidence-based methods and strategies have been proposed to ensure a healthy lifestyle such as remaining active, proper diet and nutrition, adequate sleep, and personal care/hygiene.<sup>1)</sup> I firmly support these valuable suggestions because the effects of COVID-19 remain substantial, especially in developing countries such as the Philippines, where the healthcare system requires improvement. Moreover, I wish to highlight that these suggested healthy lifestyle strategies are effective only if every concerned citizen possesses enhanced virtues. Virtues play a vital role in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and in future health crises. A virtue is an acquired human quality, the possession and exercise of which enables achieving goods that are internal to practices, and the lack of which effectively prevents the achievement of such goods.<sup>2)</sup>

Recent data from the World Health Organization revealed that, as of January 23, 2023, there have been 664,097,132 confirmed cases of COVID-19 worldwide, including 6,716,108 deaths. There were 4,071,963 confirmed cases in the Philippines, with 65,694 deaths on the same date.<sup>3)</sup> Virtues are an integral part of human nature. This is a person's highest spiritual quality. The most significant shift in the concept of virtue dur-

ing the pandemic was the rethinking and increased awareness of the importance of virtues such as solidarity and moral responsibility, as well as aspects of relationships with people such as kindness, compassion, and empathy.<sup>4)</sup> The COVID-19 outbreak has revealed that both governments and individuals must take moral responsibility to overcome the pandemic.<sup>5)</sup>

What are the essential roles of virtues in the fight against chronic diseases and in improving public health in general? Virtues direct attention to what is essential for a healthy lifestyle. It helps a person to choose their "needs" and not their "wants." If a person exercises to become physically active and avoid obesity, but lacks the virtue of self-control, eating unhealthy and in an untimely manner when tired can disrupt the plan. If individuals are aware of the basic health protocols to avoid the spread of the deadly virus but lack the virtues of moral responsibility and compassion, they may be neglectful by reasoning that the situation is gradually improving. If self-care, temperance, and solidarity with others are deeply embedded in one's system, avoiding vices such as prohibited drugs, alcohol, unhealthy foods, or smoking, which can trigger cardiovascular or respiratory diseases, can certainly be practiced. If a company is true to its vision of justice, security, and social responsibility, then all its employees should receive equal and prompt health-care benefits and other assistance for health services.

Virtues are applied morals and actions that promote individual and collective well-being.<sup>6)</sup> The battle against chronic diseases and public health crises confronted by families continues over time. However, if these essential virtues are enhanced and become a vital part of one's system, the fight can still be won.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

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