



José Florencio F. Lapeña, Jr., MA, MD

Director and Trustee, Healthway Philippines, Inc.

Joining the Call to End Nuclear Weapons, Before They End Us

The *Philippine Journal of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery* previously co-published two guest editorials, on “Reducing the Risks of Nuclear War— the Role of Health Professionals”¹ and “Time to Treat the Climate and Nature Crisis as One Indivisible Global Health Emergency”² that addressed dual potentially catastrophic concerns that both place us “on the brink.”³

By co-publishing these guest editorials, the *Philippine Journal of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery* joined the call for “health professional associations to inform their members worldwide about the threat to human survival and to join with the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) to support efforts to reduce the near-term risks of nuclear war.”¹ As enumerated in the editorial,¹ we urged three immediate steps that should be taken by nuclear-armed states and their allies: 1) adopt a no first use policy;⁴ 2) take their nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert; and 3) urge all states involved in current conflicts to pledge publicly and unequivocally that they will not use nuclear weapons in these conflicts. **It is alarming that no progress has been made on these measures.**

Thus, on our 44th Anniversary, we join over 150 scholarly scientific journals worldwide in co-publishing another Guest Editorial on “Ending Nuclear Weapons, Before They End Us.”⁵ We call on the World Health Assembly (WHA) to vote this May on re-establishing a mandate for the World Health Organization (WHO) to address the consequences of nuclear weapons and war,⁶ and urge health professionals and their associations (including otolaryngologists – head and neck surgeons, all surgeons and physicians, and the Philippine Society of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery, Philippine College of Surgeons, Philippine College of Physicians, Philippine Academy of Family Physicians, Philippine Pediatric Society, Philippine Obstetrical and Gynecologic Society, Philippine Society of Anesthesiology, Philippine College of Radiology, Philippine Society of Pathologists, other specialty and subspecialty societies, and the Philippine Medical Association) to urge the Philippine Government to support such a mandate and support the new United Nations (UN) comprehensive study on the effects of nuclear war.⁷

Keywords: nuclear power; war; atomic energy; radiation; nuclear weapons; global health emergency

Correspondence: Prof. Dr. José Florencio F. Lapeña, Jr.
Healthway Medical Network
7F Makati Stock Exchange
6767 Ayala Ave., Makati City 1226
Philippines
Phone: (632) 7720 6128
Email: lapena.jff@achealth.com.ph

The author declared that this represents original material that is not being considered for publication or has not been published or accepted for publication elsewhere, in full or in part, in print or electronic media; that the manuscript has been read and approved by the author, that the requirements for authorship have been met by the author, and that the author believes that the manuscript represents honest work.



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)
Attribution - NonCommercial - NoDerivatives 4.0 International

Philipp J Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg 2025; 40 (1): 4-5

© Philippine Society of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery, Inc.



Eighty years ago, in 1945, the first atomic bomb exploded in the desert of New Mexico, followed three weeks later by the “cataclysm of radioactive incineration” ... “unleashed” ... “on Hiroshima and Nagasaki” by “two relatively small (by today’s standards) tactical-sized nuclear weapons.”⁵ Although the numbers of nuclear weapons have decreased to 12,331 today from their 1986 peak of 70,300,⁸ this is still equivalent to 146,605 Hiroshima bombs!⁹ Indeed, “even a fraction of the current arsenal could decimate the biosphere in a severe mass extinction event.”⁵

And yet, instead of taking heed and slowing down, “a worldwide nuclear arms race is underway,” with “China, India, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia and (the) UK all enlarging their arsenals”⁵ ... and “an estimated 2,100 nuclear warheads in France, Russia, (the) UK, US and ... China” ... “on high alert, ready for launch within minutes.”⁸

With disarmament in reverse, extensive nuclear modernizations underway, multiple arms control treaties abrogated without replacement, no disarmament negotiations in evidence, nuclear-armed Russia and Israel engaged in active wars involving repeated nuclear threats, Russia and the US deploying nuclear weapons to additional states, and widespread use of

cyberwarfare, the risk of nuclear war is widely assessed to be greater than ever.⁵

We cannot remain complacent; this year, the Doomsday Clock was moved closest to midnight since it was founded in 1947.¹⁰ And yet, the alarms seemingly fall on deaf ears, like those denying climate change in the face of overwhelming evidence.

Health professionals are well aware how crucial accurate and up-to-date evidence is to making good decisions. We and our organizations should support such a renewed mandate by urging our national WHA delegates to vote in support and commit the modest funds needed to re-establish WHO’s work programme, especially now, as the organization faces severe financial strain with the US decision to withdraw its membership.⁵

We must act now and make our voices heard. “The UN scientific panel and a renewed mandate for WHO’s work in this area can provide vital authoritative and up-to-date evidence for health and public education, evidence-based advocacy and policies, and the mobilized public concern needed to trigger decisive political leadership.”⁵ Indeed, “this is a core health imperative for all of us.”⁵

REFERENCES

- Abbasi K, Ali P, Barbour V, Bibbins-Domingo K, Olde Rikkert MGM, Haines A, et al. Reducing the risks of nuclear war— the role of health professionals. *Philipp J Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg*. 2023 Nov 20;38(2):9-10. DOI: 10.32412/pjohns.v38i2.2207 (published simultaneously in multiple journals; see: <https://www.bmj.com/content/full-list-authors-and-signatories-nuclear-risk-editorial-august-2023>).
- Abbasi K, Ali P, Barbour V, Benfield T, Bibbins-Domingo K, Hancocks S, et al. Time to treat the climate and nature crisis as one indivisible global health emergency. *Philipp J Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg*. 2023 Nov 20;38(2):6-8. DOI: 10.32412/pjohns.v38i2.2209 (published simultaneously in multiple journals; see: <https://www.bmj.com/content/full-list-authors-and-signatories-climate-nature-emergency-editorial-october-2023>).
- Lapeña JF. On the Brink: The climate and nature crisis and risks of nuclear war. *Philipp J Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg*. 2023 Nov. 20;38(2):4. DOI: 10.32412/pjohns.v38i2.2225.
- Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation. No first use: frequently asked questions. 2023. [cited 2025 Apr 16] Available from <https://armscontrolcenter.org/issues/no-first-use/no-first-use-frequently-asked-questions/> (cited in reference 2).
- Abbasi K, Ali P, Barbour V, Birch M, Blum I, Doherty P, et al. Ending nuclear weapons, before they end us. *Philipp J Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg*. 2025 Jan-Jun;40(1):4-5. (published simultaneously in multiple journals; see:).
- World Health Organization. Effects of nuclear weapons and war on health and health services. EB156/CONF/10, Executive Board, 5 Feb 2025. [cited 2025 Apr 16] Available from: https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB156/B156_CONF10-en.pdf (cited in reference 5).
- United Nations General Assembly. Nuclear war and scientific research. A/C.1/79/L.39 15 Oct 2024. [cited 2025 April 16] Available from: <https://reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/1com/1com24/resolutions/L39.pdf> (cited in reference 5).
- Kristensen H, Korda M, Johns E, Knight M, Kohn K. Status of world nuclear forces. Federation of American Scientists. [cited 2025 April 21] Available from: <https://fas.org/initiative/status-world-nuclear-forces/> (cited in reference 5).
- Norwegian People’s Aid. Nuclear weapons ban monitor 2024. February 2025. [cited 2025 April 21] Available from: <https://banmonitor.org/> (cited in reference 5).
- Science and Security Board. Closer than ever: It is now 89 seconds to midnight. 2025 Doomsday Clock Statement. Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. 28 Jan 2025. [cited 2025 Apr 16]. Available from: <https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/2025-statement/> (cited in reference 5).