

7 medical missionaries die in Cebu car crash

Written by PHILIP S. CHUA, MD, FACS, FPCS
Saturday, 27 January 2018 16:48



PERISHED: Dr. Nunilo Rubio
SURVIVED: Dr. Elenita Rubio

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Seven Filipino-American medical missionaries, on a stopover in Cebu, on their way to Camiguin to do medical mission, were killed when their rented Toyota Grandia van (plate number AED 1299) crashed into a mahogany tree in the town of Alegria.

The three other passengers sustained severe injuries.

The driver, identified as Gilbert dela Cruz, 44, who admitted he fell asleep on the wheels while traveling at high speed, according to Alegria Police.

The group of physicians and nurses from the United States were in Oslob, a town about 73 miles south of Cebu City, that Saturday morning of Jan. 20, 2018, and were bound for Kawasan Falls in Badian when the crash happened between 11 a.m. and noon, about 9.5 miles from their destination.

The fatalities were Dr. Nunilo Rubio (Chicago); Joseph and Juvella Huang; Reynaldo and Diana Pascual; Berniti Roxas; and Aurora M. Gagni of Orland Park, Illinois.

The survivors are Dr. Elenita Rubio; and Fred and Leonor Tsai, all from Chicago.

Dr. Nunilo Rubio was 74.

Aurora M. Gagni was an RN, 63.

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Reynaldo and Diana Pascual were from White Plains, N.Y.

The five who died on the spot were taken to Reinhard Wirtgen Memorial Hospital in Badian while the other five transported to Badian Hospital.

Two died on the way to the hospital.

The other three were later transferred to Chong Hua Hospital in Cebu.

The driver, who owns the van which he occasionally rented out, suffered only minor wounds on his knees and elbows and was detained at the Alegria Police Station.

These physicians and nurses, like hundreds of others from dozens of cities in the United States and Canada, do annual or biannual medical missions to various rural towns in the Philippines, personally paying for all their airfare, local transportation expenses, meals, and purchasing medications, equipment, and supplies for their humanitarian mission to the underserved areas of the country.

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Demolition of the vehicular crash in Alegria, Cebu on Jan. 20, 2018. (Photo by Benjie