

## **CAST-Eye Bank Special Session I: Variations in Eye Banking in Different Localities - Successes and Challenges**

### **Unfolding the New Chapter of the Philippine Eye Bank**

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The medical arm of the Eye Bank Foundation of the Philippines is the Santa Lucia International Eye Bank of Manila. This institution has been operating for the last 27 years. The partnership with the medico-legal officers of the Philippine National Police has been a major source of corneal tissue for domestic use and international sharing. Most corneal buttons are from the Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western and Central Police Districts of Metro Manila.

When the Covid-19 pandemic struck our country, the Enhanced Community Quarantine was implemented. This meant severe restriction of people outside their abode. There was work stoppage in many industries and members of the community depended largely on the government for food rationing. The crime rate diminished and corneal procurement drastically went down. To add to our operational difficulty, nurses who were with us for many years got attracted to the greener pasture abroad.

The leadership of the eye bank started to tap various regional government and private hospitals to become retrieval centers. One of our strategies is to partner also with some funeral parlors too. Indeed, the pandemic has opened new opportunities for us to look for new sustainable relationship with healthcare facilities. We are slowly improving our yield because we constantly plant the seeds of corneal donation on a wider base.