

Workforce shortages and limited public hospital capacity remain major barriers to stroke care in the Philippines, new report finds

Filipino experts call for equipping more public hospitals with advanced imaging technology, stronger EMS infrastructure and greater investment in specialist training to close these gaps

MANILA, 2 September 2026 – Workforce shortages and limited public hospital capacity remain barriers to stroke care in the Philippines, according to a new report, *Strengthening Stroke System Readiness Across ASEAN*, unveiled today by Siemens Healthineers at Hospital Management Asia 2026 in Bangkok, Thailand.

The report draws on insights from seven leading experts across Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, including Dr. Jay Villavicencio, an endovascular neurosurgeon and member of the Board of Trustees of the Stroke Society of the Philippines. Private hospitals currently provide most of the country's stroke care, while government hospitals — which serve the majority of patients — often lack the advanced imaging equipment needed to treat the most severe strokes.

The World Health Organization's South-East Asia Region accounts for over 40% of global stroke mortality,¹ and carries nearly half of the developing world's total stroke burden, with severe long-term disability affecting roughly one-third of all stroke survivors². In the Philippines, stroke is the third leading cause of death³, with the burden compounded by high rates of hypertension, the leading risk factor for stroke⁴.

¹ Pandian JD, Padma Srivastava MV, Aaron S, et al. The burden, risk factors and unique etiologies of stroke in South-East Asia Region (SEAR). *Lancet Reg Health Southeast Asia*. 2023; **17**:100290. [doi:10.1016/j.lansea.2023.100290](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lansea.2023.100290)

² Ng JC, Churojana A, Pongpech S, et al. Current state of acute stroke care in Southeast Asian countries. *Interv Neuroradiol*. 2019; **25**(3): 291-296. [doi:10.1177/1591019918811804](https://doi.org/10.1177/1591019918811804)

³ Philippine Statistics Authority. 2024 Causes of Death in the Philippines (Provisional as of 31 January 2025). Cerebrovascular diseases ranked third among leading causes of death nationally.

⁴ Stroke burden in the Philippines (1990–2023): Temporal trends and risk factors from the GBD study. medRxiv. 2026 (preprint, based on Global Burden of Disease Study 2023 data).

"Every healthcare system across Southeast Asia is at a different stage of its stroke care journey, yet many of the challenges are shared," said Fabrice Leguet, Managing Director ASEAN and Head of Enterprise Services Asia-Pacific & Japan, Siemens Healthineers. "In the Philippines, this challenge shows up in extending specialist capability and equipment beyond the private hospitals that currently provide it. Improving outcomes depends on how effectively the entire stroke system works together to reach more patients."

Limited stroke-ready public hospitals remain the greatest challenge in the Philippines

Private hospitals in the Philippines have demonstrated strong capability in delivering advanced stroke care, including clot dissolving treatment (thrombolysis) and the physical removal of blood clots (thrombectomy). Experts see significant opportunity to extend this capability more broadly – particularly by equipping more public hospitals with advanced imaging technology, and by strengthening emergency medical services so more patients can reach the right care quickly.

Workforce capacity is a further area of focus: the Manila metropolitan area, home to an estimated 20 to 30 million people, has only five neurovascular surgeons capable of performing thrombectomy, and specialists frequently move between hospitals based on need. A lack of emergency medical services (EMS) infrastructure and low insurance coverage were identified as additional barriers.

Financing remains part of the same picture. The Philippines' universal healthcare system is still developing. Stroke treatment, including mechanical thrombectomy, is not yet covered, and no reimbursement mechanism is currently in place — though experts noted recent progress in expanding coverage for acute stroke care.

AI can help direct limited specialist capacity

Artificial intelligence emerged as a tool that could strengthen imaging-based patient selection in the Philippines, helping physicians identify which patients are most likely to benefit from advanced treatment. Experts stressed, however, that technology is most effective when integrated into well-designed clinical pathways and supported by trained professionals, robust referral networks and standardised care protocols.

Five priorities for strengthening stroke readiness

Beyond expanding infrastructure, experts agreed on a shared goal: an ecosystem of stroke care where every patient can benefit from treatment, regardless of financial capability. Immediate priorities include in the Philippines:

- Establishing advanced stroke services in government hospitals with access to thrombectomy-capable equipment
- Recruiting and training neurovascular surgeons, and distributing specialists to provinces beyond the capital
- Strengthening EMS infrastructure to help patients reach care more quickly
- Extending national health insurance to cover mechanical thrombectomy and other advanced stroke treatments

“Stroke care depends on a chain of decisions and actions that begins before a patient reaches hospital. No single institution or technology can strengthen that chain alone,” said Leguet. “In the Philippines, that means bringing government, healthcare providers and industry together to extend the specialist capability that already exists to more patients, in more hospitals, across the country.”

Read the full report [here](#).

Notes to editors: The ASEAN Stroke Response Insights Board brought together seven leading stroke experts from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam to discuss stroke system readiness across Southeast Asia. The Philippines was represented by Dr. Jay Villavicencio, an endovascular neurosurgeon and member of the Board of Trustees of the Stroke Society of the Philippines. Through a structured regional dialogue, participants shared country-specific experiences, identified common barriers across the stroke care pathway and developed practical recommendations to strengthen coordination, improve access and accelerate timely stroke care across the region.

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