

# Future Perfect

by NANA CARAGAY photographs by JC INOCIAN



Rex Gloria looking crisp and confident in his Makati office. He specializes in preventive medicine, helping clients 'nip things in the bud' to ensure maximum health and wellness.

*The medical technology of the future is here, and it can be found at the Royal Preventive Medical Clinic*

**T**he 2010 film *Never Let Me Go* envisions an alternate universe where people never get sick. Thanks to medical breakthroughs, life-threatening disease becomes a thing of the past and people can live past the age of 100, albeit due to practices that provoke moral and ethical debate. Likewise, the 1997 movie *Gattaca* portrays a dystopic future where genetic engineering rules and the quest for superiority begins even before a baby is conceived.

Hearing Dr. Rex Gloria talk about the work that they do at the Royal Preventive Medical Clinic can sometimes call to mind visions from the pages of a sci-fi novel—a world where blood testing, genetics, and as yet unheard-of advances in the medical field can eliminate the possibility of ever getting sick again. “Basically, our patients are all healthy,” he says of their ultra discreet, high-powered clientele. And the goal is to keep them that way. In fact, his task is to further improve upon their condition until clients become the optimum versions of themselves.

The light bulb moment occurred when he spent his days performing operations in the hospital. “When I did surgery before, I felt like I’m always late in helping people,” he confides. “I realized I should shift to something to help patients even before they get sick or develop a big medical problem.” He headed to Belgium and France to receive training on hormone treatment for menopausal women before taking up his master’s in preventive medicine at Germany’s Dresden University. There, his eyes were opened to a kind of medicine which, instead of treating people who are ailing and in physical pain, works with them while they are in good health in order to make them feel even better.

In 2007, Gloria opened his practice in Makati. Located in the penthouse of the Aboitiz Building, his clinic features streamlined furniture, lush greenery, and a posh reception area, looking more like a chic, modern boardroom than a medical facility. Here, he entertains a steady stream of “executives or business owners who want to stay fit and at the top of their game.” To this discerning clientele, health is of the utmost priority because to get sick would be the equivalent of precious time lost, spent recovering or recuperating. “It’s a big investment because, if you are the one running your company, leading a city or country, or you’re an athlete or the head of the family, you want to be there for your business or your family. You want to stay healthy to continue working and earning money and enjoying what you have worked hard for.”

To that end, Gloria broadly describes their process as “an executive check-up, but with in-depth analysis of a patient’s needs so that it’s more customized.” Treatment begins with testing, and here he tells us about the many different tests their clinic offers. There is a genetic test, which is so comprehensive it needs to be done only once in your life. From a swab of spit, your DNA reveals clues about illnesses you could develop in the future. “You have in your genes certain mutations that do not become a disease in people when they’re born, but these genes are actually changed when a certain environmental factor has been introduced in their lifetime,” he says.

Among the things that can be identified are your risks for prostate cancer or sporadic breast cancer (which could develop even if you don’t have a history of breast cancer in your family). Indeed, your genes are a rich source of information—everything from your response to cigarette smoke and broccoli to how you metabolize coffee can be found in it. They can even examine how you react to different kinds of medicine. “We do this to make our treatments for patients more customized. You know the phrase, ‘*hiyang sa gamot?*’ It could be genetic. You can run the genetic test to find out whether there are certain drugs that are not compatible with you,” Gloria says.

They can also perform blood tests, which may be done annually. From your sample, a Septin9 test can detect your risk for colorectal cancer, while

a telomeres test evaluates your potential life span and longevity. (“Turtles live a hundred years because their telomeres are long,” Dr. Gloria explains.) There is also a food intolerance test for those who find they have developed hypersensitivity to, say, gluten, flour, or dairy. “When you eat certain kinds of fruits or vegetables, you might develop eczema or migraines or you feel bloated, constipated, or depressed. It’s not that you’re allergic to the food, you’re just not tolerating it well.” The sample is sent to Laboratoires Reunis in Luxembourg, and results arrive within three weeks to a month.

Another test they can conduct is heart rate variability monitoring, the same one used by athletes in Europe, to measure your heartbeat during certain times of day—when you’re working, exercising, and asleep—and evaluate your stress and recovery. “This is very important for those people who are into running. They don’t know how their body recovers after a marathon, and they might be injuring themselves because they don’t have proper recovery.” Supplements can then be customized for improved sleep, post-workout recovery, and the like. Even your exercise routine can be customized—they can tell you which workout, whether cardio or weight training, would be of maximum benefit to you.

The clinic also offers tumor vaccination, designed to treat prostate, lung, breast, skin, and colorectal cancer. “After a patient has been exposed to cancer, we take the biopsy report and we make a vaccine that’s specific for the tumor they had,” Dr. Gloria says. The treatment is designed to work alongside chemotherapy, radiation, or even alternative medicine to increase its efficiency and prevent the cancer from recurring.

But again, the principle behind preventive medicine is treating patients when they are healthy in order for them to stay that way. Thus, Gloria’s clients are usually “people who are not sick, but have symptoms that were not diagnosed or addressed in a regular hospital visit. They want to understand their bodies better.” This consciously eschews a one-cure-for-all approach, since people’s bodies react differently to various vitamins, supplements, and medicine. With their comprehensive testing and diagnosis facilities, it takes all of the guesswork out of the best way to deal with your condition. “In preventive medicine, we help you customize a program that you do every single day, but you know that after five years, 10 years, 15 years, you can look at your contemporaries, relatives, or friends and see that compared to them, you haven’t really gotten sick. You’re even getting stronger, healthier, and you’re looking good. We bring in tools to diagnose and to treat any deficiency related to nutrition or their brain neurotransmitters.” From here, they can prescribe vitamins and supplements based on your deficiencies to address precisely what you need.

“We’re managers of our patients’ health,” he continues. “They always say, ‘This is the best thing that has happened to us,’ which is why they bring in their parents, friends, and relatives. People around them are getting sick, but they don’t get sick easily. They’re strong, their sex life is back, and they’re creating more projects and businesses.” And if you need proof of the demand, just take a look at their lengthy waiting list. It takes at least three months for new patients to book an appointment (and they don’t entertain walk-ins). But the doctor firmly believes that for those who choose to go this route, it is definitely worth it. “We get a lot of families coming in because they know that it’s something they need to spend on now so that in the future, they save themselves from a lot of trouble. It’s the best insurance because you see the results while you’re still alive.”

*Royal Preventive Medical Clinic is located at 8/F Aboitiz Bldg., 110 Legaspi St., Legaspi Vill., Makati City. For appointments, call tel. no. 844-7798 or 845-0725 or log on to [royalpreventive.com](http://royalpreventive.com).*