

Leadership, unified multisectoral efforts needed to move PH breast cancer control forward

Aug 22, 2023

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- *Organized by the Swiss Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines on behalf of the Philippine Cancer Society and ICanServe Foundation, with the support of Novartis Healthcare Philippines, the roundtable series aims to help meet the Global Breast Cancer Initiative targets and motivate stakeholders to support the implementation of the National Integrated Cancer Control Act.*

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Organized by the Swiss Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (SwissCham Philippines) on behalf of the Philippine Cancer Society (PCS) and ICanServe Foundation, with the support of Novartis Healthcare Philippines, the roundtable series aims to help meet the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Breast Cancer Initiative (GBCI) targets and motivate stakeholders to support the implementation of the National Integrated Cancer Control Act (NICCA). The final roundtable is scheduled on August 31, 2023.

Representing Department of Health (DOH) Secretary Dr. Teodoro Herbosa, Dr. Jan Aura Laurelle V. Llevado, Chief, Cancer Control Division, DOH Disease Prevention and Control Bureau, presented the “*Sulong Kalusugan*” Health Sector Strategy (HSS) 2023-2028, key activities in the implementation of the National Integrated Cancer Control Act (NICCA), and the role of the Cancer and Supportive-Palliative Medicines Access Program (CSPMAP) in health sector financing strategy. She underscored the importance of unifying the breast cancer control initiatives of different stakeholders in government, the private sector and civil society, as well as address barriers in governance.

“All stakeholders should have a shared vision. We need to rethink cancer control and adopt a preventive approach,” Dr. Llevado said.

Dr. Josephine Tolentino, Head of Medical Oncology Section at The Medical City, shared pain points in the breast cancer care journey of patients in their facility, particularly in navigating the different government agencies to seek financial assistance. She raised the possibility of implementing interhospital navigation to government hospitals included in the CSPMAP, and stressed the importance of a multidisciplinary team in selecting the best treatment for breast cancer patients.

“Hospital CEOs should see the big picture in cancer,” said Dr. Eugene Ramos, President and CEO of The Medical City, highlighting the importance of multidisciplinary leadership and governance in improving cancer survivorship.

According to Dr. Ramos, hospital CEOs should maximize survival or minimize mortality by creating structures, programs and platforms for early and correct diagnosis and appropriate treatment. They should provide access to value-based cancer care, and strike a balance between quality and compassionate care, and individual patient participation. Moreover, hospital CEOs should help cancer patients navigate their journey of fear, uncertainty and hope; establish partnerships with research institutions and philanthropies; and prepare the next generation of cancer warriors in the healthcare workforce.

“Addressing the psychological and emotional aspects of cancer can ultimately contribute to a healthier, more informed population that seeks timely medical care,” said Dr. Buenaventura Ramos, Past President of the Philippine Society of Medical Oncology, who shared a unique perspective on mindfulness and psychosocial care in cancer.

“By identifying red flags on obvious disinformation, fact checking, performing analytical thinking, and consulting your trusted doctor, breast cancer patients are able to better protect themselves from disinformation and misinformation which are false and inaccurate information presented as facts.,” said Mr. Joel Chong, Country President, Novartis Healthcare Philippines.

“Let us continue to galvanize our efforts in promoting early diagnosis and expanding access to treatment for breast cancer to benefit patients, their families, and society as a whole. The objectives of the “Inspiring Conversations on Breast Cancer in the Philippines” roundtable series are aligned with the WHO Global Breast Cancer Initiative targets and the NICCA goals,” said Ms. Christine Fajardo, SwissCham Philippines Chairperson and Communications & Engagement Head, Novartis Healthcare Philippines.

Ms. Kara Magsanoc-Alikpala, Founding President of ICanServe Foundation; and Rachel Rosario, Executive Director of the Philippine Cancer Society, issued the “Call to Action: Manifesto of Support for Patient Survivorship”.

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Photo shows (from left) Mr. Joel Chong, Country President Novartis Healthcare Philippines; Mr. Vincent Sumergido, Supervising Health Program Officer, Disease Prevention and Control Bureau - Cancer Control Division, Department of Health; Dr. Rachel Rosario, Executive Director, Philippine Cancer Society; Dr. Buenaventura Ramos, Past President of the Philippine Society of Medical Oncology; Dr. Josephine Tolentino, Head of Medical Oncology Section, The Medical City; Dr. Eugene Ramos, President and CEO, The Medical City; Dr. Jan Aura Laurelle V. Llevado, Chief, Cancer Control Division, Disease Prevention and Control Bureau, Department of Health; Dr. Corazon Ngelangel, President, Philippine Cancer Society; Ms. Christine Fajardo, Chairperson, SwissCham Philippines and Communications & Engagement Head, Novartis Healthcare Philippines; Ms. Jing Castañeda, health advocate and journalist who served as moderator; and Kent Marjun Primor, Director of Operations, SwissCham Philippines.

About Philippine Cancer Society (PCS)

The Philippine Cancer Society (PCS) is a private, non-stock, non-profit corporation registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission on 22 December 1956. It was founded by a group of laymen and medical doctors with the aim of “helping the Filipino cope with cancer by preventing it and diminishing death caused by it, especially among the disadvantaged, through information, education, advocacy and focused services.”

About ICanServe Foundation

The ICanServeFoundation is an advocacy group founded in 1999 by four breast cancer survivors led by journalist Kara Magsanoc-Alikpala. Co-founding ICanServe were Crisann Celdran, Becky Fuentes and Bet Lazatin. The four friends saw the need to provide a circle of support for women who were newly diagnosed,

women on cancer treatments and women in remission navigating through their “new normal” life. They also saw the need to provide women with information.

ICanServe provides hope and help to women with breast cancer. It promotes and conducts early breast cancer detection programs in local communities providing sustained access to accurate diagnosis, timely treatments and patient navigation. Its network of cancer survivors lights the path for women with cancer towards total healing.

About Swiss Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines

SwissCham Philippines is a non-stock and non-profit organization dedicated to promoting and fostering trade, investment, and economic relations between Switzerland and the Philippines. It provides a platform for Swiss and Philippine businesses to connect and collaborate, providing access to a network of business leaders, experts, and decision-makers.

About Novartis

Novartis is reimagining medicine to improve and extend people’s lives. As a leading global medicines company, we use innovative science and digital technologies to create transformative treatments in areas of great medical need. In our quest to find new medicines, we consistently rank among the world’s top companies investing in research and development. Novartis products reach more than 750 million people globally and we are finding innovative ways to expand access to our latest treatments. About 105 000 people of more than 140 nationalities work at Novartis around the world. Find out more at www.novartis.com.

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