

# Inspiring Conversations on Breast Cancer: Roundtable Series to Improve Survivorship in the Philippines

Jul 12, 2023

- The first of a series of roundtable discussions aiming to promote awareness on breast cancer and help address gaps in breast cancer care kicked off today with key stakeholders from the public and private sectors in attendance.
- 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 “Inspiring Conversations on Breast Cancer in the Philippines” roundtable discussion 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 (NICCA).

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A hybrid event, the first roundtable discussion was held at The Manila Peninsula with virtual participants joining via Zoom. The ensuing roundtable discussions are scheduled on July 26, August 9, August 26, and August 31, 2023.

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 “Inspiring Conversations on Breast Cancer in the Philippines” roundtable discussion 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 (NICCA).

Specifically, the roundtable discussion series seeks to define the patient journey and pain points in breast cancer care; communicate the importance of early diagnosis and prompt treatment; present the organizers’ initiatives to enhance the patient journey and address breast cancer management through primary, secondary and tertiary prevention to end of life, focusing on survivorship and quality of life; and network public and private cancer centers towards collaborative management of Filipino breast cancer patients.

“The PCS is but one of many NGOs at the community bedside, bringing cancer awareness information education research to patient navigation from early cancer detection and treatment to hospice-palliative care. Perhaps we are not in the immediate patient’s bedside but we are always nearby, contributing to survivorship,” said PCS President Dr. Corazon Ngelangel, who spoke on the “Patient Journey Across the Whole Breast Cancer Care Continuum – the PCS Hand”.

“Cancer care is not just about the medical treatment. It is also about being side by side with the patient navigating through this complex and challenging journey,” said Dr. Marie Belle Francia, Head, Cancer Institute, St. Luke’s Medical Center-Bonifacio Global City (SLMC-BGC), who spoke on “Patient Journey and Pain Points in Advanced Breast Cancer Care”.

Ms. Kara Magsanoc-Alikpala, Founding President of ICanServe Foundation and Vice President for Internal Affairs of Cancer Coalition Philippines, issued the Call to Action: Manifesto of Support for Patient Survivorship". In their Manifesto, the partner stakeholders committed to achieve three targets set by the World Health Organization's Global Breast Cancer Initiative: (1) achieve diagnosis of at least 60% of invasive breast cancers at stage I or II; (2) complete evaluation, imaging, tissue sampling, and pathology within 60 days; and (3) enable 80% of patients to undergo full courses of multimodality treatment and successfully return home.

"Integrating the patient perspective across cancer care is not just a noble aspiration; it is an essential aspect of our responsibility as healthcare leaders. By empowering patients, listening to their needs, and involving them as active partners in their care, we can develop personalized therapies, improve treatment outcomes, and enhance the overall patient experience," said Mr. Joel Chong, Country President, Novartis Healthcare Philippines.

"In our mission to strengthen the economies of our two countries, one of the key focus areas of SwissCham Philippines is to champion the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 3: good health and wellbeing, and SDG 17: partnerships. To this end, we thank our partners, the Philippine Cancer Society and ICanServe Foundation, for initiating the "Inspiring Conversations on Breast Cancer in the Philippines" roundtable discussion series. Our shared goal in organizing this roundtable discussion series is to inspire all stakeholders to work together in achieving the Global Breast Cancer Initiative targets and in supporting the full implementation of the National Integrated Cancer Control Act," said SwissCham Philippines Chairperson Ms. Christine Fajardo.

Other experts also shared their insights on how to enhance the patient journey in breast cancer care. Dr. Ann Meredith Garcia-Trinidad of the Philippine Society of Medical Oncology highlighted "Patient Stories on their Survivorship Journey". Ms. Adora Perez, Vice President of Corridor of Hope, a cancer support group of SLMC-BGC, talked about "Overcoming Fears of Recurrence in Breast Cancer". Dr. Maria Cecilia Pagdanganan, Head, Breast Center, St. Luke's Medical Center, Quezon City, discussed "Breast Cancer Journey in SLMC from a surgeon's perspective".

#### 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.

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