

Screening, multistakeholder collaboration, innovation, patient-centricity keys to enhancing breast cancer care

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- *A nationwide breast cancer screening program, multistakeholder collaboration, innovation, and patient-centricity are key factors in enhancing breast cancer care in the country. These were the main takeaways during the second “Inspiring Conversations on Breast Cancer in the Philippines” roundtable series held on July 26, 2023 at The Manila Peninsula 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 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 ensuing roundtables are scheduled on August 9, August 22, and August 31, 2023.

“The ACT NOW Breast Cancer Early Detection Program of the PCS is currently being piloted at Barangay Commonwealth in Quezon City through the invaluable support of Mayor Joy Belmonte. With early detection, breast cancer is easier to treat, less costly to manage, and has better survival outcomes. We hope that the DOH and local government units will consider adopting ACT NOW to promote early detection and optimal treatment of breast cancer in the country,” said PCS President Dr. Corazon Ngelangel.

“To say that the burden of cancer is overwhelming is an understatement. The growth in cancer spending in the country is one of the fastest among all diseases, a trend that will continue in the medium to long term,” said Ms. Kara Magsanoc-Alikpala, Founding President, ICanServe; Vice President for Internal Affairs, Cancer Coalition Philippines; and Adviser, Philippine Alliance for Patient Organizations.

Ms. Alikpala shared the key findings of the Cost of Illness of Cancer study which showed that the annual economic cost of cancer in the Philippines is equivalent to 1% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). She urged the government to accelerate the full implementation of the National Integrated Cancer Control Act (NICCA) and speed up the expansion of PhilHealth benefit packages for cancer.

“In addressing the concerns of cancer patients, a holistic and integrative approach is the way to go. We need

to have an environment that is warm and caring irrespective of the socioeconomic status of the patient,” said Dr. Beaver Tamesis, President and CEO, Asian Hospital & Medical Center.

“Effective communication is key to improving health literacy which in turn helps enhance health outcomes. The top doctors around the world are not only those who are the leading experts in their field. They are also the ones who have mastered the art of communication,” said Mr. Joel Chong, Country President, Novartis Healthcare Philippines.

“As the WHO correctly noted, bridging inequities in breast cancer outcomes requires systematic improvements in access to resource-appropriate and quality services. This roundtable series aims to help achieve the GBCI target of reducing breast cancer mortality by 2.5% per year through 3 key strategies or pillars: health promotion and early detection, timely diagnosis, and comprehensive breast cancer management,” said SwissCham Philippines Chairperson and Novartis Communications & Engagement Head for Philippines & Asia Aspiring IM Ms. Christine Fajardo.

Ms. Alikpala issued the “Call to Action: Manifesto of Support for Patient Survivorship” and called on attendees to act and commit to supporting the GBCI.

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Photo shows (sitting, from left) Mr. Joel Chong, Country President Novartis Healthcare Philippines; Dr. Beaver Tamesis, President and CEO, Asian Hospital & Medical Center; Dr. Corazon Ngelangel, President, Philippine Cancer Society; Mr. Thimon Fürst, Chargé d'affaires, Embassy of Switzerland in the Philippines; Dr. Rachel Rosario, Executive Director, Philippine Cancer Society; and Ms. Christine Fajardo, Chairperson, SwissCham Philippines and Communications & Engagement Head, Novartis Healthcare Philippines. Standing directly behind Dr. Rosario are Ms. Kara Magsanoc-Alikpala, Founding President, ICanServe Foundation; and Ms. Jing Castañeda, health advocate and journalist who served as moderator, together with other roundtable participants.

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

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List of links present in page

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